

Life of Saint Anthony of Padua



by Father Servais Dirks

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Introduction

If it be, in general, true to say, that teaching instructs, but example influences, we could recommend no better reading for the faithful than that of the Life of a Saint. We might speak or write eloquently upon the Evangelical virtues, but could never do either with greater efficacy than by pointing out the same virtues fully realized in the conduct of a man, whose nature was not superior to our own, but who distinguished himself among his fellows by a more faithful and courageous co-operation with grace. As the life of a saint is a sketch of the diverse operations of Divine Grace, we necessarily meet certain actions which are, to use the expression, more to be admired than imitated; but the knowledge even of such actions is useful to the Christian. It shows him the marvels God works in His saints, the infinitely wise conduct of our Divine Providence, which, in the interest of society, sometimes grants to feeble mortals a power which belongs only to Himself: it explains to him also how the most admirable actions of the saints frequently tend only to the advantage and happiness of those who admire them, without looking to the end God proposes in the working of these wonders.

These reflections apply in a special manner to the life of Saint Antony of Padua. It is sufficient to read his biography to be convinced that, neglecting, so to speak, his own interests, he seemed to forget himself to attend merely to the happiness of others. In it we find neither the merest recital of the particulars connected with his private life, nor the picture of those interior virtues which are of habitual and daily use, in the relations between God and man, and in those of man with his fellow-man; but we meet with a multitude of noble actions, which have no other purpose but

the happiness of society: the immolation of self to promote God's glory and the interests of all his brethren, was the characteristic trait which sums up nearly the whole of Saint Antony's life.

We may conclude from the foregoing, with what scrupulous care the saint concealed from all eyes the precious treasures of his soul - an admirable precaution, which constitutes in itself alone a rare and shining virtue. From his glorious acts flow those virtues which serve them as cause and principle; add to these the biographical information furnished by his writings, as it is specially in the writings of an author that we discover the depth and brilliant points of his character; finally, second that information by some minute details gathered here and there in his admirable life, and we can form an idea, if not complete, at least sufficiently exact, of this wonderful man.

A detailed life of our saint has long been desired. Simple information and circumstantial recitals of some few miracles did not fully satisfy the pious curiosity of the faithful, to whom they taught nothing of the moral influence of the saint over his contemporaries, since they did not place his works in relation with the events or manners of his time. Nor did they follow any chronological order, thus offering to the reader a series of facts entirely destitute of logical connection.

We have thought it possible to group together, in a fitting manner, all the events in Saint Antony's life. We leave the reader to judge of our success. We have followed the chronology of Wadding, who has recorded, in his annals of the Friars Minor, year by year, the actions and enterprises of the saint, with many other events. We have also profited by the learned and laborious researches of the Bollandists, and made use of the chronicles of Mark of Lisbon, and many

others; but the chroniclers have only furnished us with isolated facts, since they follow no chronological order. Those events, for which Wadding himself indicates no precise time, we have given such place in our history as conjecture would seem to assign; furthermore, the period during which the annalist merely mentions the simple facts comprehends at most but three years.

We were careful to avoid confounding truth with error in our history, especially, as many pretend, that the life of Saint Antony was only a tissue of popular legends engendered and facts invented by the credulity of the Middle Ages. We do not hesitate to acknowledge that those so-called dark ages were really ages of Faith; that is to say, ages when respect for religion and her ministers was unlimited; when all admitted, without too rigid an examination, the appearance of Catholic truth; the very heresies of the time prove its religious tendencies. Those tendencies frequently had the most salutary effects upon both the Church and State. We need only mention, for example, the moral power of the Popes, even in temporal affairs. Where would we be now if a profoundly religious sentiment had not animated the people under the government of a prince such as Frederick II, who, in advance of his time, already professed that culpable indifference in matters of religion which constituted the great heresy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

But then, some say, the people were too eager to believe supernatural facts, and the legends of the saints were often filled with the most absurd fables. Such is the accusation brought against the Middle Ages; and we do not deny that a wise criticism has sufficiently proven that it is not without foundation in certain cases. When criticism is judicious and prudent, and based upon the judgment of the Church, she must often content herself with simple conjectures, if not

upon the nature of the facts themselves, at least as to their value in an historic point of view.

We will admit no criticism which is not based upon the Church's opinion; that is to say, in other terms, that we hold that in the examination of miracles, respect should be given to the teachings of the Church in regard to them; we should consider in the miracle a supernatural effect which Almighty power alone could produce; and finally, remember the decision of Pope Benedict XIV, according to which, a miracle should have some practical and constant results, have been performed by pious and honest means, and serve for some useful end, easily discernible by sound reason.

We should be careful not to reject a miracle merely because it can be looked upon as a natural fact. A miracle which can be explained naturally, may be no less a supernatural event, especially if it possesses all the other characteristics. For a miracle is not an action opposed to nature, but rather an extraordinary operation of nature produced by the Almighty power of the Creator. "How could it be," asks Saint Augustine, "that that which happens by God's will should be contrary to nature, since all nature obeys the Creator of all things?"

Elsewhere he says: "Sometimes they style miracles anti-natural, not because they fight against nature, but because they exceed her operations, such as we conceive them."

Excellent Catholic writers have endeavored to bring forward extraordinary operations of grace conformably to this theory; but no one, we think, has so well succeeded in so doing as the celebrated Görres, in his *Christian Mysticism*, to which well-written and learned work we refer the reader for the development of the theory of miraculous events.

We have not thought it well to omit those facts whose falsity has not been sufficiently proven: our intention, however, is not to relate all the miracles wrought through the intercession of Saint Antony after his death. We will only mention those which served to establish his title to canonization; but we will speak of some others in a special chapter devoted to the honors accorded to his memory in the different countries of Europe.

Chapter I

Christian Society at the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century
- End and Aim of the Foundation of the Order of Friars Minor
- Birth and Childhood of Saint Antony

It is above all when the Church is encompassed by a thousand dangers, that our Lord shows forth His merciful designs in her behalf. When impiety seems to have reached its zenith, and all earthly means are powerless to overcome it, then Divine Power, acting in an unseen though infallible manner, brings about so unexpected a change of circumstances, by such insignificant means, that human wisdom is struck dumb with surprise as well as admiration.

The latter half of the twelfth century had passed away in the midst of the greatest disorders, and the commencement of the thirteenth, ushered in under such evil auspices, seemed to promise nothing better. Italy was torn to pieces by the most bloody of civil wars. Rome herself had several times groaned under the cruel tyranny of ambitious demagogues, who menaced the Papal Chair. France was everywhere infested by innumerable troops of brigands, who were the dreaded precursors of the Vaudois and the Albigenses, whom we shall, a few years later, find devastating her beautiful provinces both by fire and sword. Spain and Portugal were long convulsed by the intestine wars of the natives against the Moors, who disputed the right of soil; and the situation of the other nations of Europe was equally critical. Thus it required the skill and prudence of an Innocent III to bear up under the weight of the Papacy, amid such woes and calamities.

However, that great Pope, needing some co-operators in his painful mission, God provided His Church with illustrious

personages to second the enterprises of His visible earthly representative. These latter endeavored to captivate the minds of the people, and to cause religion everywhere to triumph, while the Pope labored to re-establish union among Christian princes.

The most eminent man among these courageous apostles was incontestably Saint Francis of Assisi. He clearly comprehended which were the greatest scourges of Christianity. He saw piety everywhere weakening, the spirit of vengeance succeeding to that of fraternal charity, the disorderly love of honors and riches taking possession of all hearts; and finally, debauchery pervading all ranks of society, and threatening to stifle every feeling of religious faith.

Animated by an ardent charity, he besought His Lord to make known to him His will. His prayer was granted; for soon after we behold Saint Francis founding the order of Franciscans, or Friars Minor, destined by Heaven to fight against the vices of those unhappy times, by the practice of the virtues most directly opposed to them; by evangelical poverty; by the most perfect chastity; by blind obedience to the Holy See, and to their superiors; and finally, by the incessant preaching of Divine truths.

Amid the long series of saints which that order has given to the Church, we distinguish above all others Saint Antony of Padua, an illustrious man, who performed great prodigies during his short career, and still, at this distant day, fills the Church with the fame of his miracles. We cannot doubt that this saint was an instrument of mercy for his time, a priceless gift of Divine Providence; and since he continues to protect his votaries, and as the devotion to his glorious memory daily increases, we think it fitting and useful to offer

a detailed account of his wonderful life to the pious attention of the faithful.

In 1196, there could be seen, not far from the cathedral church of Lisbon, a house which the inhabitants of that city looked upon as the abode of virtue and heroism. It was occupied by one Martin Bulhon, an honorable man, who had fought bravely for the political liberties of Portugal, under two different princes, in the character of general officer. He was of the number of those noblemen by birth, who think to fulfill their first duties in sustaining the throne by constant fidelity and solid virtue, as well as in edifying their inferiors by the accomplishment of all religious and civil duties. It was at the time of which we are writing that his wife, the noble Maria Tevera, gave birth to a son, whom the illustrious captain undoubtedly looked upon as destined to add greatly to the family glory. For Martin did not occupy himself with any other interests than those of his time. But Divine Providence had decided otherwise: that child was called to illustrate not merely one house, but all Portugal was one day to glory in having bestowed him upon the Catholic world, and two flourishing orders were to esteem themselves happy in having numbered him among their members, both when a youth and when more advanced in years.

The Cathedral of Lisbon witnessed his baptism, and he received the name of Hernandez, or Ferdinand. His parents purposed to give him a brilliant education, as they saw in him already an illustrious captain and a skillful statesman, who would follow in the glorious steps of his father, and easily attain to the highest offices in the kingdom by his faithful devotion to king and country. These pleasing visions were far from seeming presumptuous or unlikely, since at that time the family of Bulhon was in great favor with King Sancho I.

It is always wise to entrust a child's early education to a mother's care. At that age, when the first glimmer of reason appears in the youthful mind, none save a mother can find access to the heart, and plant therein the seeds of religion and virtue. Precious seeds, holy lessons, which, received at the maternal knee, are profoundly engraven upon the memory, and in after years rise again in a lively and striking manner to cause either unspeakable pleasure or bitter regret. Maria Tevera was too virtuous not to understand fully the whole extent of her duty in this particular. She was animated by a tender love for God and His Blessed Mother; therefore she zealously endeavored to excite and develop sentiments of true piety in the youthful heart of her dear Ferdinand.

So soon as he was able to be taken from his mother's care, he was placed at the school directed by the canons of the cathedral. In those half-civilized ages, when the nobility and wealthier citizens made ignorance of letters their boast, and when the serfs wanted both time and means to apply themselves to study, public instruction was given entirely by the clergy. As early as the eighth century, Theodolphus, bishop of Orleans, mentions two kinds of schools: one taught by the rectors of the different parishes, and destined solely for children; these latter were daily called together in the sacristy after mass, to learn the Christian doctrine and the first rudiments of the Latin language. The other served for the instruction of clerks or young ecclesiastics; these were taught Latin grammar, arithmetic, philosophy, and theology. These various branches were generally taught by a canon of the cathedral, who bore the name of *ecolâtre*, or by the monks of the numerous grand abbeys.

Ferdinand frequented the school kept by the canons of Saint Mary; this circumstance would lead us to believe that already his parents destined him for the priesthood, since

they gave him a clerical education. Divine Mercy had certainly surrounded his childhood with the sweetest heavenly blessings. He loved solitude and prayer. His greatest happiness consisted in assisting as chorister at the divine office in the cathedral; he employed his hours of recreation in visiting churches and convents. He even used to rise frequently during the night, to go to matins with the canons. Nothing pertaining to childishness was ever seen about him. His angelical modesty commanded the respect and admiration of all, and his thoughtful air gave evidence of such precocious wisdom that it seemed manifest to all that Heaven had some great things in store for him.

His parents were from thenceforth convinced that Ferdinand was not called to illustrate the career of arms; they clearly understood that God asked that sacrifice of them, and, as true Christians, they would not for a moment think of opposing His divine will. He made rapid progress in his studies, and far from his piety proving any obstacle to them, he experienced, like so many others, how true it is to say with Saint Paul, that it assists all. True piety never hinders the development of the mind; on the contrary, it is of great utility, since it teaches to regulate time, to moderate the movements of vivacity, to restrain the ardor of disorderly passions, and thus renders man better qualified to apply himself profitably to serious studies.

Chapter II

Antony Decides to Forsake the World - Community of Regular Canons of the Holy Cross - Antony Joins that Community - His Holy Life while at the Convent - His Departure for Coimbra

Eternal wisdom paternally warns young men against the numberless dangers which threaten their innocence: "Son," says he, "when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." Truly it is above all at the epoch of youth that we discover that the life of man is a combat. A thousand enemies assail the young man upon his first entrance into the world. This one seeks, by means of seduction and sophistry, to plunge him into terrible disorders; pride endeavors to place a bandage over his eyes which will blind him to his faults; the fascinating pleasures of sense show themselves to him under forms at once seductive and specious: still ignorant of the effects of evil, he suffers himself to be drawn away by its dangerous allurements. Add to this that he is quickly tormented by that interior struggle of concupiscence against the spirit, by that desperate revolt of the flesh, against which man momentarily resists only to fall finally into the abyss of guilty pleasures.

Such, therefore, was the struggle, such was the revolt which Ferdinand was early called upon to endure. But that God of goodness and love, who had watched over his pious childhood with such tender solicitude, did not abandon him in these dangerous and critical times. Ferdinand was docile to the voice of wisdom, who cried out to him: "Humble thy heart and endure; incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding. Believe God, and he will recover thee: and

direct thy way and trust in Him. For if thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy heart to prudence, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God."

Ferdinand zealously obeyed the interior movements of grace. He drew back with affright before the gulf which lay yawning under his feet, and determined, without further delay, to secure his innocence from the contagion of the world. God called him to live in solitude among his fervent disciples, and he nobly followed this sublime vocation. His virtuous parents did not oppose his heroic determination, for they did not wish even to seem to dispute, if we may so speak, with God for the possession of that angel of virtue and innocence, that child of benediction. Ferdinand then, with their full and free consent, repaired to the residence of the canons of Saint Vincent, situated without the gates of Lisbon, where he received, upon his reiterated and pressing demand, the monastic habit.

The members of that community belonged to the institute of the Canons of the Holy Cross, which was established at Coimbra, and which regarded as its founder the virtuous archdeacon Tello, who, in company with nine other zealous and holy persons, succeeded in founding in that city, in 1131, a convent, which finally became the mother-house of all the canons regular in Portugal. These religious led a very austere life. They followed, besides the rule of Saint Augustine, the statutes of Saint Ruf, of which the learned Dom Martene gives us the following details: "Before admitting novices into the convent they warned them that the poverty of the house was great and the inconveniences numerous, that the discipline was constant and severe, that neither exemption nor abatement were tolerated, and that infractions of the choral regulation were severely punished. That their modest demeanor must indicate a

profound humility, that they must keep their heads and looks continually cast down, that they must ever remember that sinner who dared not so much as raise his eyes to Heaven, but beat his breast, exclaiming: 'God be merciful to me, miserable sinner that I am.' They were further required to fast frequently, to sing long offices, and to persevere uninterruptedly in mental prayer."

Ferdinand finally had attained the position for which he so ardently longed; he belonged entirely to Him whom he had chosen from his earliest years as the sole object of his love. Now he could, by means of the holy exercise of prayer, unceasingly entertain himself with his Beloved; thus, far from forgetting God in his dealings with his companions, he knew how to feed the celestial fire of his ardent piety by the use of holy conversations. Persuaded that religious perfection depends upon the perfect accomplishment of the smallest duties, he zealously applied himself punctually to fulfill all those prescribed to him by his rule. He never broke silence without a sufficient reason, and his charity and humility were so great that, notwithstanding the unspeakable pleasure he felt in assisting at Mass and the other offices, he always knew how to make a sacrifice of them, either to render some service to one of his brethren, or to perform some menial occupation. He had deeply reflected upon these words of the Holy Ghost: "He who despises little faults will fall insensibly into greater ones." And truly from whence comes that deplorable remissness which we sometimes see creeping into religious communities? - the lamentable scandals given by those very persons whose duty it is to enlighten and edify others? Is it not the neglect of their holy monastic observances which produces all those evils, and causes them to fall far short of evangelical perfection? No one becomes vicious in a day: they begin by infringing the rule of silence, by taking unnecessary care of their bodies, by murmuring against their superiors; then

they proceed to uncharitable contentions with their brethren, next form particular friendships, and when by similar conduct they have thus laid themselves open to the attacks of the Prince of Darkness, the latter has no trouble to draw them into still more flagrant disorders.

How different the life of a religious who lovingly fulfills all the sacred obligations of his holy state of life! His zeal is indefatigable; he cheerfully practices the virtue of Christian expiation, and one might say that, not satisfied with walking in the road of evangelical perfection, he takes, as it were, wings, in order to fly therein with marvelous rapidity. But how shall we explain their admirable progress in God's service? In this way: Animated by the life of Jesus Christ himself the truly religious man loves silence and recollection; these two virtues obtain for him the spirit of prayer, constant vigilance upon the various movements of his heart, and fidelity to grace, whose inspirations are never in vain, since he ever maintains himself in the dispositions requisite to hear and comprehend her salutary admonitions. Yes, it is ever thus; fidelity in slight duties is a sure sign of deep and solid piety, and also the most powerful means to fulfill all other obligations perfectly.

It was in this manner that Ferdinand prepared himself to make his solemn vows; in this manner also he lived after he had pronounced them with the greatest joy and pious satisfaction. However, he quickly perceived that he could never, while in Lisbon, enjoy that recollection and solitude he so ardently longed for; the frequent visits of his parents and other relatives became insupportable to him; they awoke in his heart those natural affections which prevented him from detaching himself completely from the world, and thus living, unknown and forgotten by all, in a holy intimacy with God alone. Incited by grace, he sought his superior, laid his troubles before him, and earnestly besought his

permission to repair to Coimbra, and enter the convent of the Holy Cross. Dom Gonzalez Mendez, prior of the house, surprised and afflicted by so unexpected a request on the part of our saint, endeavored vainly to dissuade the young man from his project, by placing before him, in a forcible manner, the sad consequences of inconstancy. But Ferdinand, firmly persuaded of the purity of his own intentions, urged his request so wisely and persistently that the superior, a man of great prudence, seeing clearly that the Holy Ghost spoke by his mouth, no longer objected, but gave him the required permission. Ferdinand, therefore, took leave of his afflicted brethren in religion, courageously quitted his native city, and was gladly received at Coimbra by his new associates, to whom he was already well known by the report of his numerous virtues.

Chapter III

Antony Begins his Studies - God Honors him by Various Prodigies - Presence of some Friars Minor at Coimbra - Antony's Esteem for those Religious

His new brethren were not long in convincing themselves that Ferdinand's change of residence had not been made without reflection, and that the love of novelty had no share in his decision. At Coimbra as at Lisbon, his holy life was an eloquent example of virtue for all those who were heartily desirous of acquiring true religious perfection. He had, it is true, ardently longed for solitude and tranquility; but from seeking therein a dispensation from the rigor of monastic life, he saw and sought but a means to perfect himself in mental prayer in the midst of the lowest employments and the best-regulated studies. Called by God to the sublime functions of the priesthood and the sacred duties of the apostolate, he thought himself strictly obliged to prepare for that great vocation by a close study of the ecclesiastical sciences. For that reason he gave himself up zealously to reading the Holy Scriptures, and the commentaries written thereon by the holy Fathers of the Church, and understood both so admirably that he became, in afterlife, a true prodigy of sacred learning. He proved, by his ardor for the study of the holy writings, that he was animated by Divine grace, since God wishes a priest to join knowledge to virtue. How can we doubt that he, whose glorious mission it is to defend and increase Christ's kingdom on Earth, should seek, by means of deep and solid learning, those arms necessary to fight successfully against heresy, who, on her side, craftily makes use of science to combat faith, and to spread her errors on every side?

Reasoning thus from a religious point of view, Ferdinand gave himself up to the studies belonging to his holy state, meanwhile laboring only to fulfill the Divine will in his regard. God recompensed the noble virtue which urged his application to the Holy Scriptures, by unveiling to him the mysteries of His love, and by animating him with that ardent piety which penetrates the mystic sense of the Divine oracles, and inflames man with love toward his Creator, even in the midst of deep and distracting studies. The saints find these precious advantages in study, because they transform it into prayer. Science never fills them with pride, nor seduces their intellect, because they ever keep their attention fixed upon the eternal truths, admire Divine Providence in all things, and humbly recognize their own nothingness. Sweet and salutary were the hours which Ferdinand passed at the foot of his crucifix in deep meditation upon the Sacred Scriptures! Sweet and salutary also were those which he employed in those lowly occupations which were calculated to keep him humble before men! But God took pleasure in exalting his virtue in proportion as he sought to lower himself in the eyes of all around him.

It frequently happened that he was charged by his superior with some menial employment, while the rest of the community were engaged in the Divine Office. Although it was a great sacrifice for him to be absent from Mass, he loved to adore the Divine will which deprived him of that happiness, by continuing to pray interiorly with the greatest tranquility of soul. When the sound of the bell announced the moment of the consecration and elevation, he knelt down wherever his duty found him, in order to annihilate himself before God, whose Divine Presence he everywhere adored. And, wonderful to relate! the convent walls seemed to open before him, and his seraphic gaze reached the sanctuary, where he contemplated Jesus Christ, though he

was at some distance from the church. God seemed pleased to honor the holiness of His servant by so great a miracle. His pure and innocent soul seemed to be, as it were, a throne where the Most High loved to seat Himself. Thus we need not be astonished that the devils themselves feared his power, as we shall quickly see by the following account taken from the old chronicle:

His superior, one day, gave him the care of a sick brother. Ferdinand, who saw Jesus Christ alone in the persons of all sick and suffering men, acquitted himself of that duty with boundless charity and solicitude. He quickly noticed that his brother was violently tempted by the Devil. He immediately raised his heart to God by means of a short and fervent prayer, and, impelled by the Spirit of strength which produces miracles, animated at the same time by unlimited confidence in God, he placed his scapular upon the aching limbs of his poor brother, and the temptation instantly ceased.

Ferdinand passed many years in the enjoyment of the sweetest solitude. He was as happy as man can be here on Earth; all his desires being accomplished; since he never wished any thing save the fulfillment of God's good pleasure. We must not imagine, however, that his love for recollection prevented him from seeking the society of his brethren. On the contrary, he loved to inflame their minds with the love of God, by frequent agreeable and pious conversations. Fully convinced that the monk should not be confounded with the hermit, he was careful not to seclude himself from the company and friendship of his fellow-religious, he walked onward in the heavenly road with them, in order that, by a mutual exchange of consolations and services, he could more easily overcome the obstacles which separate a religious from his eternal reward. He also loved to converse with the Friar Minor who came to ask alms from the

canons of the Holy Cross. Those fervent religious, who had a residence at Coimbra, near the chapel, dedicated to the holy abbot Antony, found great pleasure in listening to the wise discourses of the young canon, whom they always quitted both instructed and edified. He spoke to them with loving eloquence upon the love of God, and painted in the liveliest colors the benefits bestowed upon us by our Divine Savior, the unspeakable joys of Heaven, and the inestimable happiness of a pure conscience. His eyes burned with the celestial fire which inflamed his soul when he proved to them, with sentiments of the most profound contempt, the perfidy of this world, and the nothingness of its wealth and pleasures. No one could listen to him without feeling something of that supernatural love which formed all his happiness.

Ferdinand felt himself more and more strongly drawn toward the order of Saint Francis; he admired the great detachment from earthly things publicly manifested by the Friars Minor, in the coarseness of their dress and the austerity of their lives. He wished, like them, to travel over Europe, in order to gain souls to Christ; he also wished, like Saint Francis, to go amidst infidel nations, in order to preach the true God, and gain the martyr's crown. Hitherto, these had been merely ardent wishes; but a most extraordinary event, which gladdened all Portugal and came to the knowledge of Ferdinand, caused him to make an inviolable determination to exchange the dress of a canon for the coarse habit of the children of Saint Francis. The news came that five courageous Friars Minor had been gloriously martyred in Morocco, and that their mortal remains were about to be brought back to Portugal. As the particulars of this memorable martyrdom exercised a decisive influence upon the fate of Ferdinand, we will give a detailed account of it in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

Account of the Martyrdom of Five Friars Minor at Morocco - Arrival of their Remains at Coimbra - Antony Takes the Resolution of Becoming a Friar Minor

It was toward the close of the year 1219: Don Pedro, the Infante of Portugal, was standing in a large hall in his palace of Morocco, where he then resided, owing to some dispute with his brother, King Alfonso II. He was listening with great attention to the discourse of a Friar Minor, who had come with four other missionaries of the same order to preach the true faith to the Moors. Berard de Carbio spoke in the name of the courageous band who had selected him as their head. It was composed of Otho, a priest, Peter de San Giminiano, a deacon, and two lay brothers, Accursius and Adjutus. The prince listened attentively, while he silently contemplated those worthy personages who had already courageously preached the faith in Seville. Their coarse clothing, their hollow cheeks, their sunken eyes, their pale and emaciated countenances, their heads bowed beneath the yoke of penance, as if under that of painful toil - all about them contrasted strangely with the celestial joy which seemed to shed a mysterious light over their serene though suffering features. Their words breathed only zeal for God's glory and contempt of death; and the prince clearly understood that they intended to begin their noble project by evangelizing the city in which they then found themselves.

Don Pedro did not approve their plan; he feared a revolt among the Moors; and in such a case, the Portuguese who had followed him to Morocco were too few in number to defend him from their fury. He, therefore, endeavored to persuade those apostolic men not to quit his protection, and

to return with him to Europe, rather than to expose their own lives and those of the Portuguese who inhabited Morocco. But the Friars Minor, filled with confidence in God, and with contempt for the greatest dangers, politely bade adieu to the prince, in place of listening to, or trying to refute, the urgent representations he made to them.

They, then, leaving the palace, repaired to the public square, where Berard preached the gospel in the Arabic tongue, and pointed out the impostures of the false prophet Mahomet. The Moors, flocking in crowds to see the strange spectacle, took them, at first, for fools, and saluted them with the grossest insults. Berard, finally succeeding in imposing silence upon them, demanded to be shown to the presence of the Emir.⁹ The Moors answered him that he had gone on a pilgrimage to visit the tombs of his ancestors, and pointed out to him the road by which he would return. Berard went forth to meet him, followed by the Moors, who were curious to witness the result of his interview with him.

The five missionaries walked in profound silence and recollection, putting up fervent prayers meanwhile to Heaven for the conversion of the infidels. All at once they perceived in the distance a richly-dressed cavalier, escorted by a numerous body of Moorish cavalry. It was Yousouf II, Emir of Morocco, who was returning to his palace, followed by his suite. Berard immediately sprang upon a chariot which he saw near him, and at the moment when the prince was about to pass by, he courageously raised his voice from his impromptu pulpit, and began to preach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and to point out the errors of Mohammedanism. Yousouf, who was an ardent Mussulman, was stupefied at the audacity of the curious-looking strangers. However, taking them for fools, he contented himself with driving them out of the city, and begging the Infante of Portugal to

have them conducted to Septa, from whence they might embark for Europe.

Don Pedro complied with his wish; but the five servants of God succeeded in escaping from the hands of their guides, and retraced their steps toward Morocco, to preach Jesus Christ. When the Emir learned of their return to his capital he was highly incensed, ordered their instant arrest, and had them thrown into prison, and left there to die of hunger. Comforted with interior consolations by Him who can preserve the lives of His creatures without the use of material food, they lived for the space of twenty days without taking any nourishment. But at the same time that Heaven protected its servants in a miraculous manner, it caused their persecutors to feel the full effects of its justice: an excessive heat dried up every thing; men and animals suffocated with thirst, and died in the greatest suffering. This terrible scourge awakened their consciences; the people went in a body to the Emir, to beg them to free the friends of the prophet Jesus, in order, they said, that God would not destroy the whole country. Youssouf had the five captives brought to the foot of his throne. When he saw that neither hunger nor thirst had affected their health, he was greatly troubled, and asked them who had nourished them during the time of their imprisonment. The magnanimous Berard gave him this prudent answer: "If, O prince, you will embrace the true religion, you can also experience the marvelous power of God, who nourishes His servants with an immaterial nourishment, until they become ripe for the celestial abode." He was about to pursue his discourse, when Youssouf, who had no idea of becoming a Christian, interrupted him, saying that he would restore them to liberty under the express condition of their never reappearing as missionaries in that city. When Don Pedro was informed of the release of the Friars Minor, he caused them to be sought after by some Portuguese soldiers, and shut them up in a

house where they could be securely detained until a favorable opportunity offered to send them to Septa. But the apostolic men succeeded a second time in eluding the vigilance of their guardians, and began anew to evangelize the inhabitants of the city.

Their flight greatly perplexed the Infante Don Pedro, as the fanaticism of the Moors, and their blind belief in the voluptuous doctrine of Mahomet, caused him to fear a sedition. To prevent this, he ordered the five religious to be again arrested. This was accomplished by force of arms by the Portuguese, and the missionaries were conducted to the palace of the Prince, where they were closely confined to await the moment of embarkation.

About that time, the Berbers, or wandering Moors, made an invasion into the kingdom of Morocco. Their passage was marked by unheard-of cruelties; the cities and villages were reduced to ashes; columns of fire and smoke rose toward the clouds; the piercing cries of the miserable inhabitants, who were indiscriminately murdered, mingled with the bloody threats of the fierce barbarians. The city of Morocco daily expected to become the theater of similar atrocities. It was quite time to take some measures to insure its safety; for that reason Youssouf set out immediately at the head of a powerful army, which was joined by Don Pedro and his Portuguese soldiers.

The enemies were conquered, and Youssouf hastened his triumphal entry into Morocco; but on their homeward route the army became entangled in a vast desert, where they could not discover the slightest trace of water. As they were not provided with any sort of drink, the soldiers had to struggle against the most intense thirst, added to the heat of a burning sky. In this terrible situation, the Moors threw themselves upon the ground and pressed their lips to the

burning sand, as if they hoped to draw from thence some refreshment in their misery. Their horses, worn out with fatigue and panting with thirst, sunk under the weight of their riders. Despairing of escaping a lingering death, the soldiers threw themselves down, overcome and sorrowful, upon the treacherous and burning soil.

Thanks to the tumult into which these painful wants had thrown the Moors, Berard and his companions succeeded in escaping from their prison, and unexpectedly arrived at the resting-place of the unfortunate army. At the sight of so great a disaster, Berard stationed himself in the middle of the camp, and cried out in a loud voice:

"Brave warriors! if you will embrace the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and receive holy baptism, I promise you in the name of the Most High God, that you shall have water in abundance."

The unhappy Mussulmen seemed willing to listen to his words, to the great indignation of the Emir, who answered, with ill-concealed anger:

"I would sooner believe that this scourge is a punishment from God, which He inflicts upon us, because we have not revenged our prophet for the blasphemies which these vagabond preachers cease not to shower upon his name."

Berard paid no attention to his words; but, having raised his heart to the God of armies, he took his staff with which he dug a little well in the sand, and immediately there burst forth a source of clear water, which quenched the thirst of both men and horses.

This miracle did not open Youssouf's eyes, for on his return to Morocco he reiterated his command to the Friars Minor to abstain from preaching in that city, but he was not obeyed.

Nothing could intimidate those heroic confessors of the faith, nor cause them to renounce their holy undertaking. Their zeal was proof against the entreaties of the Infante Don Pedro, against the brutality of the Moors, and against the menaces of the Cadi, who had caused them to be brought before his tribunal; but they were soon seen announcing publicly the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Emir was greatly incensed at their apostolic daring, and, resolving to punish it, ordered them to appear before him, and declared his firm determination to put them to death.

The Infante, not doubting that their final hour was come, besought the Cadi not to give up their bodies to the insults of the Mussulmans, but to have them carried to the quarters of the Portuguese, which was readily granted. The five confessors were quickly brought before the tyrant; they were wasted by suffering and austerity, but full of energy and courage, and awaited their sentence of death with the utmost coolness. Youssouf did not seem irritated against them, but addressed them with great calmness in the following manner: -

"I have caused you once more to appear before me, to know whether you will persist in remaining my enemies, and thus subject yourselves to the most cruel torments, or whether you will become the king's friends, and by that means obtain the greatest favors?"

Berard, speaking in the name of his brethren, replied in these words: -

"You can, O prince! look upon us all as your true friends, since it is through love for you and all your subjects, that after leaving our own country, we have come to announce to you the true road to salvation, and to save you and your people from eternal damnation!"

These words greatly moved the prince, who retired into another apartment to conceal his emotion, and to deliberate quietly upon what step he was next to take in the affair, leaving the religious alone among the nobles of his court. During his absence a lively controversy took place between the priest Otho and a Bey, who endeavored to convince him of the truth of Mohammedanism. The missionary refuted all his arguments in so clear and prompt a manner, that the Bey, to whom the circumstances of the place interdicted the use of arms, struck him violently upon the face. Otho quietly presented the opposite cheek, saying gently: "God forgive you, brother! behold, I here offer you the other cheek; strike it, if you will; for I am ready to suffer all things for my God who has suffered so much for me."

This sublime answer disconcerted the Moors, who replied to it by a respectful silence, which lasted till the Emir reappeared in their midst. He seemed calmer, and a certain expression of gentleness shone on his face. Seated on his throne, he made new efforts to overcome their heroic constancy, both by seducing words and brilliant promises. But all his attempts to induce them to embrace Mohammedanism were vain. They disdained the first offices of the kingdom, and would not look at the five beautiful girls who were to recompense their apostasy. When the Emir saw the impotency of all his efforts to detach the brave captives from the faith of their fathers, he gave free course to his rage, crying out: "I, myself, will revenge the honor of our prophet by my own hand."

At these words the martyrs thanked God, and calmly knelt down before their executioner. The latter, foaming with rage, cut off their heads, and ordered their bodies to be cast out of the palace. The glorious martyrdom of the five Friars Minor took place on the 6th of January, 1220.

Some few months afterward they learned at Coimbra that Don Pedro had transported the bodies of the martyrs from Africa to Portugal, intending to bury them in that city. This news was a source of public rejoicing, and great preparations were immediately made to receive so precious a treasure with the utmost possible pomp. It was not long in arriving. The venerable Don Matheo, bishop of Coimbra, at the head of all his clergy, went out to meet the procession which escorted the glorious relics. King Alfonso and his queen, followed by the nobility and the whole court, walked on foot by the side of the mule which bore the holy remains, and passed between two rows of the inhabitants, who lined the streets leading to the cathedral. But God caused them to change their route. They vainly endeavored to force the mule toward the church where they wished to lay the bodies of the holy martyrs. For, the hand of God Himself; conducting it took the road toward the convent of the Canons of the Holy Cross, penetrated into that sanctuary, and, bending its knees before the main altar, remained in that position until they had deposited its precious burden at the foot of the Tabernacle.

This miracle convinced all parties that God wished the sacred relics to remain in the church of the Holy Cross. No one thought again of transferring them to the cathedral. The canons were greatly rejoiced to possess them. Ferdinand, above all, manifested the greatest joy: he could not tear himself away from the holy remains. Kneeling near the reliquary, he ceased not to beseech Heaven, by fervent prayers, through the intercession of the five martyrs, that he might enter into the order of the Friars Minor, and give his life for the faith - the double object of his most ardent desires. During one of his ecstasies, Saint Francis of Assisi, who was then living, appeared to him miraculously, and commanded him to enter immediately into the Franciscan order, adding, that by that means all his wishes would be

accomplished. This vision dissipated all his remaining doubts, and he immediately after announced to his superior his intention of becoming a Friar Minor.

Chapter V

Ways of Divine Providence toward Antony - He Takes the Habit of the Friars Minor - He Sets Out for Morocco, and Falls Sick at Septa - He Embarks to Return to his own Country, but Contrary Winds Drive the Vessel upon the Shores of Sicily - He Repairs to Assissium

God, not infrequently, makes use of extraordinary ways to lead His servants toward the career He intends for them. The means He takes to gain this end often seem very different from those which Christian prudence would suggest; but when we examine them closely, we are forced to acknowledge that they bear the seal of Divine wisdom.

Inconstancy of purpose is one of the most dangerous snares by which true virtue is assailed, and it is rarely that he who, after good advice and ample reflection, has chosen a state of life, can prudently forsake it to embrace another, no matter how perfect. This is doubly true of the religious life, since those who embrace it are ordinarily led to do so by Divine inspiration. However, we sometimes meet with remarkable exceptions to this general rule, since God may call a religious from a perfect order, to embrace another still more perfect; but, in such a case, He so clearly manifests His divine will to those persons charged to examine vocations, that it becomes almost impossible to be led into error.

Thus it was with the son of Martin Bulhon. Destined, one day, to dissipate the errors of darkness and heresy by the splendor of his learning, and to bring back, by means of his apostolic zeal, multitudes of wandering sheep to the fold of Jesus Christ, he must early learn to practice the greatest virtues, in order that - being a living example of perfection himself - he might labor efficaciously for the salvation of his

fellow-beings. For that reason God placed him in a community still in its first fervor, where, exempt from all earthly cares, he could occupy himself solely with God and his own sanctification, until the moment when - being fitted to undertake the care of souls - he could impart to others those spiritual treasures with which his ardent prayers had enriched his own soul.

Having duly labored to acquire the requisite dispositions, he hastened to obey the Lord, who called him to embrace evangelical poverty, and going at once to his superiors, he himself made known to them his ardent desire to become a Friar Minor, in order to go among the Moors and seek the crown of martyrdom; and ended by earnestly imploring them not to refuse him the consent necessary to carry out his intention.

We may readily imagine the astonishment experienced by all at this magnanimous resolution of the youthful canon; but it was decisively taken, and no reasoning could shake it. They sought, by all means in their power, to test its solidity; but once clearly assured that it was a Divine inspiration, they felt compelled to yield to their conviction, and reluctantly consented to his departure - ten years having elapsed since he entered the order.

The day upon which he quitted the Canons of the Holy Cross was truly a day of mourning for the community, as they all looked upon him as an angel sent from Heaven to lead them, both by word and example, to the practice of Christian and religious perfection. The charm of his society and the warmth of his friendship - to which his modesty gave greater price - had won all hearts to him. One of the canons, not being able to master the irritation he felt at his departure, said to him, in a slightly ironical tone, "Go, now; they will soon canonize you!" To whom Ferdinand made this wise

answer: "Well, father, if you ever hear that good news, you must not fail to thank God for me."

He soon left the city of Coimbra, and happily reached the solitude of Saint Antony di Olivario, where he was joyfully received by the Friars Minor. He hastened to clothe himself in the coarse habit of the children of the humble Saint Francis of Assissium; and in order to hide himself more effectually from his parents and friends, should they attempt to discover the place of his retreat, he changed his baptismal name to that of Antony. Some writers think that he chose that name because the convent was dedicated to Saint Antony, and that the latter seemed to have taken the young novice under his special protection.

Notwithstanding his holy impatience to go over into Mauritania in search of the martyr's palm, he was obliged to resign himself to remaining in Europe during the time necessary to perfect himself in the observances of his new state of life. He fully understood the art of drawing profit from the delay, since the change of position, which would probably have been a great source of trial to men less perfect than himself, in no way affected his peace of mind. As had been his usual custom, he continued to divide his time between singing the divine office, the study of the sacred sciences, and mental prayer; this latter comforted and consoled, while at the same time it inflamed him with divine love, which, teaching him to bear all trials patiently, in imitation of his Sovereign Master, filled his soul with ineffable spiritual joy in the midst of the most painful austerities. Finally the day came for his solemn admission into the order, and having renewed the three great vows, he received the desired permission to go to Morocco and preach the word of Christ to the Infidels.

Filled with joy and gratitude toward God, Antony took shipping at the nearest port, and, after a favorable voyage, disembarked at Septa, a city of Mauritania. He had nearly reached the goal at which he aimed, and joyfully welcomed the prospective martyrdom; but Heaven had other views for him. Hardly had he set foot upon the Mauritanian shores when he was confined to his bed with a violent fever. He thought at first that his sickness would be of short duration, and saw in it only a mark of God's love, who wished, by that mishap, to prepare him for the numerous struggles to which he was to be exposed while among the Infidels. But he was quickly undeceived, for the fever kept him in bed the entire winter. Doubtless his cure was retarded by the many privations he underwent among strangers, to whom he was unknown, and who felt no interest in his welfare. However, far from abandoning his favorite project, he disposed all his affairs, in readiness to start for Morocco as soon as his health permitted. But the more earnest he was in his noble design the more his malady increased. God finally enlightened him as to his true mission. He declared to him, during meditation, that it was His holy will that he should not go to labor among the Infidels, but that He destined him for another species of martyrdom, which he was to undergo, not among the Moors, but among Christian nations.

Antony, all-submissive to the Divine will, joyfully received this revelation, and resolved to return to Europe. From that moment his cure made rapid progress. He was soon enabled to re-embark for Portugal, where he intended to remain in readiness to go wherever Divine Providence should call him. But the vessel on which the holy young man had taken passage, though setting sail at a favorable time, had scarcely reached the open sea, when a contrary wind arose, which forced her to change her course. They vainly endeavored to reach the coast of Spain; no one could manage the helm, and the vessel, violently driven toward

the east, entered the Mediterranean Sea under full sail. After many days' forced sailing upon that sea, they saw land in the distance, and thought they recognized the shores of Sicily, which it proved to be, as the same day they entered the port of Messina.

Upon entering the city, he was charmed to learn that the Friars Minor possessed a convent in the environs. He sought it that very evening, wishing to avoid lodging with a secular. Four lay brothers alone remained there, all the other religious having gone to Assissium, where Saint Francis presided over a general chapter or assembly of all the brethren of his order. Antony seized the happy occasion of seeing and admiring that great man of whom he had heard such wonderful accounts. After one night's repose, having received the blessing of the brother who governed the convent during the absence of the Father Guardian, he set out on his journey, accompanied by a young lay brother, named Philippino, who had asked permission to follow him to Assissium.

Chapter VI

General Chapter of the Friars Minor - Antony Arrives at Assissium - His Departure for Bologna - Antony in the Hermitage of Mount Saint Paul - The Austere and Hidden Life

The general chapter of the Friars Minor was a noble and beautiful sight. The convent of our Lady of the Angels was not sufficiently large to accommodate the crowds of religious who flocked thither from all parts of the world. They were, many of them, forced to dwell in tents, spread along a vast plain, not far from Assissium. These new soldiers of Christ encamped in the greatest order. From each division of the camp holy hymns arose toward Heaven at seven different periods of the day. At midnight, that hour when silent nature seems busied in profound repose, the religious quitted their rude couch to salute the approaching dawn with the sound of matins. Except at the hours of office or chapter, the silence was deep and unbroken.

When Antony and his traveling companion arrived at Assissium, the chapter was drawing to its close; they only assisted at the last session, where they were enabled to admire the wonderful man who had filled all Europe with the fame of his sanctity, the humble Francis, so little and so simple in the eyes of the world, and yet who was seen conversing with the great ones of the Earth upon terms of perfect equality and confidential intimacy. He there gave a striking proof of his sublime humility: he again refused the generalship of his order, which all the brethren earnestly begged him to accept; the burden appeared to him beyond his feeble strength; his only desire was to pass the remainder of his days in holy obedience to his superiors, and

in peaceful contemplation of the infinite love of God, who alone formed his all.

After the chapter was dissolved, the brethren took leave of their holy founder, and of their new general, Brother Elias, and began their preparations for departure. They divided themselves into numerous bodies, and set out each under the guidance of its own provincial. Antony did not know which party to join; his simple and sickly appearance had caused him to be overlooked by all. He therefore addressed himself to Brother Gratiani, provincial of Romagna, begging him to admit him among the number of the religious belonging to that province, adding that he was earnestly desirous of being instructed, like the other novices, in all the rules and usages of the order.

Gratiani, struck with his modesty and fervor, granted his request; he took both him and Brother Philippino to Bologna, from whence he sent Antony to Mount Saint Paul, situated near that city, to fill the humble post of cook in one of the hermitages belonging to the order. Antony accepted his new situation with joy and gratitude; for having, in his extreme humility, feared becoming a burden upon the community, he was rejoiced to find that he could be made useful in any capacity. He was powerfully impressed by the calm which reigned throughout the holy solitude of Mount Saint Paul. In his holy joy he fancied himself, as it were, on the threshold of Heaven, and he longed to make that spot the place of his repose, and to end his days there in serving his brethren and in meditating upon the Eternal Truths.

From the writings of Saint Francis we may form some idea of the severity of discipline practiced in hermitages like that of Mount Saint Paul. The number of religious was never to exceed that of four; these should successively, two by two in turn, be employed in prayer or manual labor. Perfect silence

was enforced, excepting at the times of divine office, which was recited in choir; all oral communication, save with the superior, was severely prohibited; the prior was also required to prevent all conversation between his religious and seculars. Listen to the thrilling words with which Saint Francis terminates his rule of life for the hermitages: "Happy those to whom all other words save the word of God are insipid, and who only make use of that to awaken and to inflame all hearts with the fire of Divine love. Woe to the solitary who takes pleasure in useless and unprofitable conversations, thus leading others to love frivolity! He, far from edifying his neighbor, scandalizes him and renders him as imperfect as himself."

Antony had remarked upon the mountain a cell, which had been hollowed out of the rock by the monk who inhabited it. It was at some little distance from the other cells, and was only remarkable for its uncomfortable situation: it had no shelter from the inclemencies of the season, but was exposed to the intense sun of summer, the piercing cold of winter, and the heavy autumnal rains. As our saint was enamored of any means of mortification, and of whatever served to put down pride and sensual gratification, he begged the holy inmate of the coveted abode to give it up to him, which request was immediately granted.

Upon taking possession of his new habitation, Antony entered with fresh vigor upon his new duties. His love for God led him to hate his body, which he looked upon as the greatest enemy of his soul. He joyfully seized all occasions of self-mortification; made no complaint of the weather, however disagreeable; chastised his feeble body both with haircloth and the discipline; scarcely took sufficient nourishment to preserve life; and when failing nature demanded some repose, he stretched his aching limbs upon the cold, wet floor of his grotto, and slumbered until

midnight; that hour arrived, he quickly arose in order to sing matins with his brethren.

No one can form any idea of the divine consolations which he enjoyed in this blessed solitude. To the holy raptures, during which his soul was filled with joy unspeakable, followed the contemplation of nature, in which he saw fresh testimony of God's fatherly love toward men. When he cast his eyes upon the valley, which extended smiling in the sunlight from the foot of the mountain to the very walls of Bologna, like a magnificent garden whose surface is somewhat undulating, and where quiet streams and impetuous torrents cross their silver waters and then unite in their meandering course - then turning his admiring view upon the charming picture formed by Mount Saint Paul, whose summit, crowned with luxuriant moss and thick groves of trees, shone with ever-verdant beauty, his heart was filled with heavenly emotions, and his words of grateful love mingled with the songs of the birds praising that God whose glory shone forth so wonderfully in His works.

Nothing pertaining to this world had any charm for Antony; God alone formed all his delight, since he found in him all that could render man happy. The Earth had, as it were, faded from his sight, and he, if he thought of men, it was only to pray for sinners and to recommend his fellow-religious to Divine mercy. Was he justified in thus burying his talents? Might he not fear that God would one day reproach him with having neglected to use them for the salvation of his neighbor? Antony was not troubled by such fears: enlightened by the supernatural light which God had bestowed upon him in reward for his fervent prayers, he knew that talent frequently exposes its possessor to great danger in the world, and that, even with the best intentions, one cannot sometimes avoid deplorable mistakes. Moreover, no one can labor efficaciously for the salvation of souls

unless they have received a special call from God to that effect. It is from God alone that man should receive his rule of conduct; he should not even desire to labor for the good of others, should such not be the Divine will. To know and to follow that will clearly, a religious has no other means but that of blind obedience to his superiors. With regard to Antony, it was soon clearly proven that God did not intend him to be, as it were, hidden from the sight of all, as he was soon to enlighten the world by the dazzling example of his virtue and learning.

He continued to make rapid progress in the pursuit of religious perfection, his ardent zeal enabling him to attack and overcome all obstacles in his way. He seemed insensible to the requirements of his health, which soon became very much impaired by reason of his continual fasts and other exercises of penances which, added to his constant contemplation of heavenly things, weakened him so much that he could no longer stand when he attended the conferences with his brethren. He seemed ready to faint from moment to moment. "Thus," says a pious chronicler, "did this man of piety and consummate learning live long in the capacity of an humble, illiterate lay brother. He no longer dared to undertake any great work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, since his first heroic attempt had so signally failed. He gave himself up entirely into the hands of God, and completely renounced his own will." Such conduct could not but render him happy and pleasing to God, who takes his own time to make use of men unknown to the world, as we shall see fully exemplified in the case of Saint Antony.

Chapter VII

Antony Preaches Before an Assembly of Friars Minor and Dominicans - He Becomes a Priest, and is Sent to Vercelli to Pursue his Studies there - Theological Science During the First Half of the Thirteenth Century - Testimony Regarding Antony Given by the Abbot of Vercelli - Saint Francis Charges Antony to Teach the Sacred Scriptures - Antony Sets Out for France

Antony had attained his twenty-seventh year when his superiors sent him, in company with several other religious, to be ordained priest at Forli. Painful as it was to him to quit his uncomfortable though peaceful grotto, he went quickly whither holy obedience called him. Upon reaching Forli, the Friars Minor found some young Dominicans, who, like them, had come to receive Holy Orders; and that fraternal charity which had never ceased to exist between the children of Saint Francis and those of Saint Dominic, led them both to form but one community during their stay at Forli.

One evening, after supper, the religious of the two orders, while conversing together upon holy things, were suddenly interrupted by the guardian or superior of the Friars Minor, who had himself accompanied his young religious. He proposed that one of the Dominicans should make a pious allocution. Each one excused himself, alleging want of preparation, and urging, besides, that that honor belonged by right to the Friars Minor. These latter opposed excuse to excuse, and the friendly contest of reciprocal deference was still going on, when the guardian suddenly brought it to a close. Turning toward Antony, who, with his eyes modestly cast down, had remained silent during the general tumult,

he said: "Since none of you will preach the word of God, Antony will have the goodness to do so for our instruction."

Antony was greatly distressed by this command; he urged his incapacity to speak properly before such an assembly, the little opportunity for study he had enjoyed while filling the office of cook, and earnestly begged the guardian to dispense him from preaching. All present readily accepted his excuses, having formed a low opinion of his talents, he having, the better to conceal his learning, always refrained from speaking Latin. They even doubted his capacity to serve Mass. The guardian, however, renewed his request, and Antony was forced to obey. "Speak, my son," he said to him, "and preach to us whatever the Holy Ghost may inspire you."

Antony rose, and in a trembling voice began a discourse, which turned upon the dignity of the priesthood. His language, at first simple and disconnected, becoming warmed with the fire of Divine wisdom, grew flowing and majestic: he astonished his hearers by his happy choice of sacred texts, in which he disclosed to them the most profound mysteries. His eloquence, at once sweet and penetrating, animated and encouraged the hearts of all. Thus he seemed to add the character of prophet to that of priest. His sermon surpassed anything that the assembled religious had ever before listened to; and they were the more astonished at such eloquence in a man whose ordinary conversation was so simple, and who was evidently grievously afflicted at the unexpected circumstance which had obliged him to display his learning and talent.

The provincial of Bologna lost no time in acquainting Saint Francis of Assissium with the unexpected discovery. The latter, fully understanding Antony's capacity, and admiring his great humility, charged him, notwithstanding his youth,

to preach the Word of God, merely requiring that, before beginning his sermons, he should pass some time in study, under the direction of the abbot of Vercelli, the master of sacred sciences.

Antony said his first Mass in the church of the Annunciation at Bologna. After that great act, which he offered to God as the first-fruits of his apostolate, he hastened to Vercelli to take up those studies in which he made such wonderful progress, that in later years he was judged capable of teaching theology and philosophy.

Persons generally form a false idea of the state of learning in the Middle Ages. If it be true that the laity paid no attention to the sciences, it is no less so that among the clergy devoted to the higher studies were frequently found men of rare genius, who penetrated the deepest mysteries of Holy Writ, enlightened the world by their sermons, and by writings appropriate to the wants of their time, and served as counselors to princes, whom they instructed and aided in the art of governing their subjects by means of wise lessons of policy, inspired and dictated by Divine wisdom.

Theology was the special study of that time; all other sciences were made subservient to it, because God is the central point toward which all efforts of human intelligence should tend. Hence the most celebrated theologians joined the practice of good works to that of study, thus following the well-known maxim: We love God better in proportion as our knowledge of Him increases. They sought by a holy life to understand and draw profit from their discoveries, made by the aid of faith and reason, and thus to render themselves worthy of more sublime knowledge. They endeavored, by properly regulating their minds, to perfect their intelligence, to fortify themselves against false theories, and to establish a sort of harmony amid their

acquirements. In a word, they studied at the same time scholastic or speculative theology, and mystical theology, which has for its end man's salvation. The chief reason of the general tendency of all minds toward the theological sciences, lay in the reading of, and meditation upon, the writings, either true or supposed, of Dionysius the Areopagite. These writings contained the most sublime thoughts upon the Divinity, and an admirable method of enjoying, by means of an entirely spiritual life, the most ineffable sweetness and delight in learning and contemplating the Divine mysteries. It was this, properly speaking, that was called sapientia, from the Latin verb sapere, to taste, to enjoy, as is clearly explained by Saint Bonaventure, in his treatise upon the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The high esteem and great repute in which the works of Saint Dionysius were everywhere held caused them to be read and commented upon in the public schools. The celebrated Thomas Gallas, abbot of the Benedictines at Vercelli, was one of his most able commentators. Antony was sent to this latter city to assist at his remarkable and edifying instructions, which at the same time served to perfect his knowledge and to increase his love of God. We may readily imagine the many advantages so holy a religious must draw from similar lessons, what rapid progress he must have made under so able a master - he, who was already so well versed in mystical theology, and had enjoyed the hidden treasures of heavenly de light found by those who seek only to love God and to mortify their senses. Listen to the testimony of Thomas Gallas himself who, in his explanations of the writings of Saint Dionysius, speaks of Antony in the following manner: -

"Love frequently penetrates into mysteries which human knowledge is powerless to understand, and which it seeks

vainly to explain. We read, that many bishops devoid of human learning, but full of zeal for theological studies, attained so high a degree of divine science - a science infinitely superior to all others - that their intelligence, raising itself above the highest earthly attainments, penetrated even into the angelic chorus, to prostrate itself before the adorable Trinity. I have seen the same prodigy exemplified in the person of Antony of Padua, a Friar Minor: that holy man, who was little versed in human learning, applied himself with so great an ardor to the study of mystical theology - a theology seldom attainable by the human mind - and by his purity of soul and sincere love of God, made such remarkable progress therein, that I can say of him what the Gospel tells us of Saint John the Evangelist: that he was a burning and a shining light. For Divine love consumed him, and his brilliant example seemed to shed around him the glory of supernatural light."

The Friars Minor, struck with admiration by his extraordinary progress in sacred learning, begged Antony to teach them theology and the Sacred Scriptures. Our holy and humble Friar, who fled from all kind of human applause, would not yield to that request; but the community, continually reiterating the demand, he judged proper to have recourse to the counsels of Saint Francis. The holy founder, seconding the wishes of the brethren, wrote Antony the following letter:

"Brother Francis to Brother Antony, health and benediction. I wish you to teach the Sacred Scriptures to your brethren; but in such a way - and this is my express command - that such teaching does not weaken the spirit of prayer, either in yourself, or in others; in that, as in all things, conform yourself to our holy rules. Adieu."

Antony now willingly accepted the duties of professor; he had long before seen the necessity of well-instructed priests

who would be competent to fulfill the requirements of the evangelical ministry, especially at a time when heresy and licentiousness continued to plunge Italy into the most dreadful disorders. He first taught theology at Montpellier, in France, then at the school of Bologna, which, having been closed in order to mortify the ambition and punish the disobedience of a provincial, had been reopened with the consent of Saint Francis. Our young doctor taught afterward at Padua, at Toulouse, and several other cities, joining the fatigue of preaching to his other labors. He was truly admirable in his apostolic eloquence. We will now contemplate him as a preacher; previously sketching the religious and moral condition of his time, in order the better to appreciate his mission in society.

Chapter VIII

Heresies of the Thirteenth Century - Qualities Required by Antony in his Ideal of a Christian Orator - Antony Preaches in France - His Sermon at the Provincial Chapter at Arles

From the earliest ages of Christianity, the Church had been infested by a sect which derived its principal errors from the religion of the Persians. A Christian, named Manès, who had been a slave in Persia, could not reconcile the existence of evil with the infinite goodness of God. As he held pantheistic ideas, according to which all beings proceed directly from the Divine substance, he imagined he found the solution of this apparent contradiction in the doctrines of Zoroaster, who supposed two principles or two gods, one the author of good, the other the author of matter or evil: this latter, according to the teaching of Manès, was the God of the Old Testament. That heresiarch mingled some Christian truths with his great errors. The mixture of the two systems constituted his religious belief: which later he introduced into Europe, in many parts of which it was willingly received, and made rapid progress. Its partisans were called Manicheans, from the name of the Persian slave. All civilized Europe was quickly inundated with these new sectaries, whose proselytism was the more difficult to fight against, as they knew how to veil their errors skillfully under the appearance of orthodoxy. The Catholic clergy could not succeed in entirely rooting out this heresy, more fatal in its effects than the plague: it was in vain that the civil power lent its powerful aid to the Church, striving by all possible means to stay the progress of Manicheism. That heresy hid itself in the shade, like fire smoldering under ashes, until the middle of the eleventh century, when it reappeared in the world under a new form. Bulgaria, already separated from

the Church, eagerly embraced the Manichean doctrines, for which reason those heretics were later styled Bulgarians. Manicheism soon had her bishops and doctors, who resolved to confide to missionaries the propagation of their heterodox teaching. A countless number of Manichean apostles spread throughout Europe. The neighboring countries, Lombardy, Tuscany, the States of the Church, France, but above all Languedoc, so eager for the religious novelties of the East, were the first conquests of Manicheism; thence pursuing her journey into Germany and the Low Countries, she soon found a multitude of adherents. Like the primitive Manicheans, the new sect were careful to conceal their name and origin. Visionary reformers spread themselves over various countries, preaching silly and absurd doctrines, and founding isolated churches, each bearing a different name. Thus successively arose the heresies of the Paulicians, the Cathari, the Patarins, the Vaudois [Waldensians], the Albigenses, etc., who seemed to have, as a general basis, the double principle, that of good and that of evil, and only to differ from one another upon certain particular doctrines. Later they threw off all the dogmas of the Church, consequently rejecting the authority of the Holy See, the existence of Purgatory, the Eucharistic mystery, the invocation of saints, etc. The influence of the spirit of lying and darkness led them now to affirm that baptism consisted only in the imposition of hands, which was nothing else but a principle of consolation or strength, which the Holy Ghost came himself and placed in the soul of those thus baptized.

A long experience had shown that the temporal power could never stay the progress of religious errors, and that the latter had even been frequently sustained and favored by the princes themselves. For this reason the Sovereign Pontiffs changed their mode of attacking heresy: true, they did not refuse the aid of the crowned heads; but they placed their principal hope in the apostolic zeal of learned and

pious preachers, who, by their edifying lives as well as their powerful and persuasive sermons, should instruct the ignorant, awaken the tepid and careless, and bring back into the fold of Christ all those souls who had been led astray by heresy and error.

We find in the sermons of Saint Antony of Padua an admirable explication of the qualities necessary for a preacher who would direct his zeal according to the needs of his time.

"A good preacher," says he, "is the son of Zacharias, that is to say, of the thought of the Lord; he should engrave deeply in his heart the remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus Christ; he should go to sleep with this thought in the night of adversity, and should awake with it in the dawn of prosperity. Then will he feel the Word of God descend into his heart - that Word of peace and life, of grace and truth. Divine Word, thou dost trouble and overwhelm the heart, but dost not break it! Word of sweetness, thou dost temper the sufferings of the soul by the balm of holy hope! Word of refreshment for dry and tepid souls!

Our saint elsewhere instituted a comparison between the preacher and Elias. "A good preacher," says he, "is like Elias climbing to the top of Mount Carmel, that is to say, to the height of perfection, where he learns, by a mysterious circumcision, to despoil himself of all vain and superfluous things. Overcome by shame and confusion at the sight of all his miseries, he humbly prostrates himself, bowing his face to the ground in token of his deep sorrow for all the sins of his past life. Elias says to his servant: Go and look out upon the sea. This servant is the body of the preacher, who cannot have his heart sufficiently pure, since he is forced in some sort to keep his eyes fixed upon the corruptions of the world, in order to fight against them successfully in his sermons. He

should look at it seven times, that is to say, that he should meditate continually upon the seven fundamental points of our faith, namely, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, Baptism, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the Last Judgment, at which the damned will be precipitated into everlasting flames. At the seventh consideration, the preacher will see, rising from the depths of the sea, a light cloud; and from the soul of the sinner, sighs of repentance and contrition. That germ of Divine mercy will develop itself in men's hearts, and become a thick cloud, whose shade will cover all earthly objects as with an impenetrable veil; then the wind of confession will blow, which will uproot sin, and not cease until satisfaction, like a beneficent shower, shall have refreshed and fructified a hitherto barren and desolate Earth. Such should be the conduct of a good preacher. . . . But woe to him whose manners are proud and frivolous, for he shall reap nothing but shame from his labors !

Antony began to teach and to preach in 1224. France was the first of all the European nations to hear his eloquent sermons and see their admirable consequences. He preached with a holy and courageous liberty; he told the truth to all, rich and poor, without any distinction of persons. In energetic and simple language he convinced the incredulous, strengthened the faith of believers, and confounded the impious. Eager to drain the chalice of sorrow and suffering, he had no fear of death; thus he was frequently enabled to offer a courageous and legitimate resistance to wicked princes, by reprimanding them like ordinary men. He even censured the acts of certain noblemen so boldly, that some celebrated preachers, who assisted at his eloquent sermons, were alarmed, and declared that such apostolical liberty proved him to be an extraordinary man for his time.

We cannot wonder at the immense good he did among the lower orders - since a preacher who flatters the strong no more than the weak insensibly wins the hearts and gains the confidence of all. Thus, having become really the preacher of the people, he exercised unbounded influence over them.

We cannot read, without wonder, the recital of the political revolutions everywhere raised by means of the seditious but able discourses of popular demagogues. However, our astonishment ceases when, with history to guide us, we see the immense power which every fearless, eloquent, and daring orator soon acquires over any multitude. The people everywhere seek to weaken the more powerful, for which end they instinctively attach themselves to those who dare to raise their voices against them. If this truth is of general application, may it not relate in a special manner to the oratorical successes of a holy preacher like Antony, whose eloquence was not found in the inspirations of passion, but drew all its power from Divine grace? This wonderful man forgot himself to think only of the happiness of others, and gave an example of the virtues which he preached. Far, then, from resembling those preachers of whom Saint Bernard says, that they are merely the channels through which God's word reaches man, he bore in his heart the treasure of eternal truth, from whence, as from a fresh and inexhaustible source, he drew the precious instructions with which he enriched the hearts of the faithful.

God frequently added such unction and energy to Antony's sermons, that the most evil-disposed persons were deeply moved. One day, being at Arles, where he was preaching in the provincial chapter, he was explaining to his brethren the meaning of the inscription on the Cross. Suddenly a holy religious, named Monald, perceived at the door of the chapter-room their holy father Saint Francis, suspended in the air, and spreading out his arms to bless the assembly. All

were filled with celestial joy during the whole time of the apparition, and did not doubt the miraculous presence of their holy founder, which was later confirmed by the testimony of Saint Francis himself. By this miracle, God showed clearly how pleasing to Him were the sermons of Saint Antony, and how conformable they were to the spirit of Saint Francis, by permitting the latter to give to him, as one of his cherished children, a visible testimony of the joy his apostolic zeal caused him.

Chapter IX

Antony Struggles Against the Heretics - He Confirms by a Miracle the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament - Wonders which Happened at Montpellier, Bourges, and Limoges - Considerations upon the Miracles of Saint Antony

An event, which took place the following year, rendered Antony's name celebrated throughout France. Being lector at Montpellier, he was frequently invited to preach in the neighboring cities. As he spared himself neither pain nor trouble, and sought only the glory of God and the salvation of souls, he joyfully accepted such invitations wherever the voice of God seemed to call him. The south of France seemed to him to offer a rich harvest. That beautiful country contained some thousands of heretics; the general corruption reigning there proving a powerful help to the daily increasing growth of heretical doctrines. Antony had, therefore, a double task to accomplish: he had to confound heresy, and to attack vice at its source. He gave neither rest nor truce to the heretics; he everywhere pursued them, and convinced them of their errors by means of reasoning and miracles. Those among them who prided themselves upon their learning and eloquence, sought out the holy doctor to contest the truth of his doctrines. He, however, never failed to confound them, and the more successful he became in his religious controversy, the more he was loved and revered by the people.

Bourges was one day selected as the scene of one of Antony's greatest triumphs over heresy. While he was preaching in that city, a heretic, of Jewish origin, who had many followers there, proposed to him a controversy upon

the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. The holy man accepted the proposal, and the day and place for the theological dispute were agreed upon. Guiald - such was the name of the heretic - presented himself before Antony, and the discussion commenced; it proved short, for the earnest and unanswerable arguments of Antony soon convinced his adversary. The latter vainly attempted to offer some embarrassing or unexpected objection. He was vanquished and overthrown by the irresistible eloquence of the holy Friar Minor. As he could not bend his proud spirit under the humiliating weight of a defeat so publicly sustained, he sought an expedient by which to revenge himself.

"Let us give up words," he said, "and come to facts. If you will prove the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar, by means of a miracle, I will not hesitate to become a Catholic."

The saint answered him: "I have full confidence in my Savior Jesus Christ, who will grant me what you ask, for the salvation of you all."

"Very well," replied the heretic, "I will keep a beast of burden three days without eating; after which, bringing it before the people, I will offer it food. You, on your side, will appear on the same spot as myself, bearing the body of the Lord, as you call it. If the animal, in place of satisfying its raging hunger, prostrates itself to adore the Blessed Sacrament, I will embrace the Catholic faith."

Antony unhesitatingly gave his consent to the trial, for he felt the power of the Most High within himself, and trusted entirely in the Divine assistance.

An immense crowd assembled at the grand square to witness the prodigy. Antony and Guiald were already

present. The former was accompanied by a few fervent Catholics, the latter surrounded by a great number of heretics, with the mule in their midst.

The saint repaired to a neighboring oratory to say Mass. When he had finished it, he returned into the midst of the crowd, the Sacred Host in his hands, and followed by a multitude of the faithful. At the same moment, a measure of fodder was placed before the mule, toward whom, Antony advancing, raised the ciborium which contained the Host, and apostrophized the animal in the following terms:

"In the name and by the Almighty power of thy Creator, whom I here hold in my hands, notwithstanding my extreme unworthiness, I order thee to approach and to testify to Him who created thee, that profound respect which is His due, in order that these misguided, wandering souls may be convinced that all creatures are subject to the Divine Creator, who descends upon our altars at the voice of His priest."

Scarcely had our saint ceased speaking, when the animal, leaving the manger, drew near to him, bowed its head, and respectfully knelt before the holy Eucharistic species. The Catholics uttered cries of joy, and the heretics, utterly confounded by their defeat, hastily retired.

Guiald kept his word; he received holy baptism, and brought all his family into the fold of the Church. Some time after, he built a Church in honor of Saint Peter, and his grandchildren, inheritors of his zeal for God's glory, also built a church, where they caused this miracle to be sculptured upon the hall of the archway. This miracle was followed by others, some of which were as follows:

Antony was preaching in the cathedral of Montpellier, upon one of the principal fast-days of the same year, 1225. Suddenly he remembered an order the superior of his convent had directed him to execute at that very time, and which he had forgotten to transmit to one of his brethren. It was customary in our houses, upon all great festivals, for two of the most ancient and virtuous religious to chant the Alleluia in the middle of the choir during High Mass. Antony had been charged with that duty, and he feared there would be no one to replace him. Deeply afflicted by the fear which his omission caused him, he covered his face with his cowl, and, leaning upon the front of his pulpit, he remained motionless, and as if out of himself. A miracle had taken place; he had assisted at the solemn Mass, and chanted the Alleluia with another religious. Returning to himself, after having accomplished that duty without leaving the place where he was, he resumed, and quietly ended his sermon.

One day while he was preaching at Bourges, so great a multitude assembled to hear him that no place in the city could contain them. The canons of the cathedral gave orders to have a pulpit erected on a vast plain situated at the gate of the city, to which they all followed the eloquent preacher. It was a magnificent summer's day. But scarcely had Antony begun his sermon, when the sky clouded over and showed every symptom of a severe storm. The saint went on quietly, notwithstanding the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning which played among the clouds; while the terrified crowd prepared to seek a refuge from the drenching rain which threatened them. At the sight of their fear, the saint recollected himself a moment, then cried out in a loud and clear voice: "Christians, fear nothing, and do not leave your places; remain where you are, and I promise you, in the name of God, that not one drop of rain shall reach you." These words reassured the immense auditory. No one moved from his place; one would say that the lively faith of Saint

Antony had passed into the souls of his hearers. For behold, the rain fell in torrents, the hail devastated the surrounding fields, but the sky above them remained clear and serene. Greatly moved by this miracle, all united in rendering thanks to God, and in testifying the utmost veneration and respect for the apostle of Provence.

Some time previously they had admitted into the convent of Montpellier a young man of great promise. Suddenly he became weary of the monastic life, and resolved to renounce it. This inconstant novice proved by his example that a man who does not resist the first suggestions of the Devil, little by little allows himself to be drawn into evil. For not content with secretly quitting a community who had been happy to admit him among its members, he repaid the benefits he had received with blackest ingratitude. He fled away by night, carrying off with him a psalter which he had stolen from his master Antony. Every one knows the value of books in the Middle Ages, and the careful exactitude with which they were written. All know also that they sometimes constituted the principal wealth of a convent. The volume of which we are now speaking was the more precious as Antony, having made use of it for the explanation of the Psalms, had enriched it with marginal notes. We can readily understand how great a loss it was for the holy doctor; but his confidence in God came to his aid in this unfortunate occurrence.

As soon as he knew of the theft of a book which was so necessary for his use, he threw himself before his crucifix and besought God to restore it to him. Heaven was not long deaf to his prayers, for at the moment when the young thief was about to cross a bridge, a terrible monster rose suddenly before him, brandishing an axe over his head, and threatening to strike him if he did not immediately return the stolen article to the convent. The guilty young man,

whom fear rendered more dead than alive, interiorly moved by Divine grace, made haste back to the convent, threw himself in tears at the saint's feet, begging him earnestly to readmit him into the community. Antony accepted his repentance, and obtained the grant of his request. It is to the filial confidence in God which Antony showed in this circumstance that we should attribute the power of his intercession when invoked by his clients to enable them to recover things which are either lost or stolen. His power in such cases has never been surpassed by any other of the saints: we notice that even those persons who put no faith in other miracles agree in admitting those of the nature just mentioned.

During his mission in the province of Limousin, he lodged one day in the house of a very virtuous man, who, knowing his love for solitude, gave him the most retired room in the mansion. He himself rose at midnight in order to see if the holy preacher passed the night in sleep. Quietly approaching his sleeping apartment, his eyes were delighted by the sight of a wonderful prodigy: he saw, through a crack in the door, the chamber lighted up by a brilliant light, and Saint Antony tenderly caressing a lovely little child. He was a witness to the inexpressible astonishment of the holy man at the unexpected apparition of the Divine Infant, and to his transports of love after having recognized in Him his adorable Jesus: he first annihilated himself before His majesty, then covered him with tender though respectful caresses, joyfully uttering the most loving words with which his ardent piety inflamed his heart. The pious host, having secretly adored God, who had so honored his abode, retired to his chamber, his soul filled with happiness at having been permitted to entertain the saint. The next morning, Saint Antony, who had learned from the mouth of the Infant Jesus that he had been watched, called him to him, and earnestly entreated him not to

divulge the miracle which he had witnessed. He therefore gave his solemn promise to that effect, which he never violated.

It is a truth, everywhere recognized, that the saints were always anxious to hide their sanctity and virtues from the sight of all. They desired only to be known and esteemed by God, deeming it unworthy of a Christian to seek the approbation of men, who rarely judge but from appearances. Knowing their own hearts, they freely confessed their weakness and misery; and the more they examined themselves the more reasons did they discover for gratitude toward God. They easily preserved themselves from the attacks of self-love, and ardently loved Him from whom they had received all things, because they knew how to appreciate at their true value, and to discern with a holy impartiality, the effects of Divine mercy and their own imperfect works. As nothing is so pleasing to God as a man who is humble and little in his own eyes, He fills them with His Divine love, favors them with all manner of graces, and generally selects them to become His instruments in the salvation of mankind.

It is under similar traits that Saint Bonaventure describes to us the saint whose life we are writing: "Antony," says he, "was little by his humility, and as he ardently loved God, so he was tenderly loved by Him."

But why should we be astonished that God honored Antony by so many miracles? Let us rather marvel at the profound humility manifested by the saints amid all the flattering testimonies of esteem and veneration everywhere bestowed upon them. Antony was the providential man of his time; for the lively faith of the Middle Ages, contrasting strongly with the general corruption of manners, people needed the striking example of a practical piety, developing itself under

the inspiration of Divine grace, and performing prodigies and miracles by means of an ardent love of God.

So brilliant an example of all virtues produced abundant fruits of penance and salvation in the hearts of all, the miracles of holy missionaries ever exciting their beholders to repentance. At that time no one sought to judge too critically of the probability or possibility of miracles, nor to reject all indiscriminately, whether true or false; but piously received whatever was thought edifying in its nature, without seeking to put limits to the Almighty power of God: therefore they believed firmly that He manifested His omnipotence when man's interest required it, and communicated such power to His saints at His will. Some may say that the faith or credulity of the Middle Ages multiplied miracles at pleasure, and filled up the legends of favorite saints with accounts, each surpassing the other in marvelousness; they should rather say that faith produced miracles. We, in our day, disdain to have recourse to God or to His saints, in any difficult circumstance; for which reason the world is so unhappy, our Lord generally giving His help only where it is sought after. Formerly, on the contrary, men humbly implored the intercession of the saints to obtain for them strength and consolation, and their fervent prayers were generally rewarded.

The annals of our order contain many other miracles by which God honored His servant in the cities of Montpellier, where he taught, and of Limoges, where he held the office of guardian. We will relate a few of them. He restored a lunatic to the use of his reason by merely touching him with his girdle while preaching. To his merits a young mother owed the preservation of her child, who had fallen into a boiler full of hot water, while she was assisting at one of his sermons. One day toward evening, the brethren of the convent of Limoges perceived some men destroying the harvest of one

of their benefactors. They made haste to inform Antony of the fact, begging him to send word quickly to the proprietor, that he might send his people thither to stop their ravages. But the saint reassured his brethren by saying to them:

"Dear brothers, rest in peace: those evildoers are no others than demons, who are striving to destroy your peace of mind, and distract you in your prayers."

The religious faithfully believed his words, and were happy to find, the next morning, that their benefactor's harvest had sustained no injury.

The same year, Antony resigned his office of superior, and prepared to return to Italy, where a vast field was opened for his apostolic zeal. Before following him into the latter country, we will glance at its condition, both political and moral, during the latter part of the thirteenth century.

Chapter X

The Guelphs and Ghibellines in Italy - Usury and Corruption of Manners - Influence of Popular Preachers During the Middle Ages - Aim of the Protection Extended by the Popes toward the Religious Orders

The beautiful provinces of Italy were all greatly agitated by a deadly struggle between two powerful factions; a struggle which under other names long convulsed that unhappy land. Toward the middle of the twelfth century, when petty republics first rose into favor, Italy witnessed the famous quarrel between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, which had taken birth in Germany. The Emperor of Germany, who, according to ancient right, thought himself the temporal head of Christendom, laid claim to the exercise of feudal power in Italy. The Italians refused to submit to a foreign yoke, the cities declared themselves free, and the petty republics proclaimed their independence. The partisans of the emperor received the name of Ghibellines, and the defenders of the national independence that of Guelphs. The Guelphs are generally, but wrongly, looked upon as the adherents of the Popes: these latter did not seek to extend the borders of their states, still less did they aspire to absolute power over Italy: the authority, or rather the control, which public usage during the Middle Ages allowed them to exercise over the actions of princes, was equally recognized by Ghibellines as well as Guelphs. Even in our own times we have had political illustration of the manner in which the Guelphs understood their devotedness to the Pope; and to convince ourselves upon that head we need only read the following lines taken from Villani, a Guelphic historian: "The Guelphic party," says that author, "is the base and most solid bulwark of Italian liberty; it fights so

energetically against tyranny that it declares every despotic king a Ghibelline; and its horror of despotism is shown by many striking examples."

The Popes frequently suffered from the application of these principles of liberty by the Guelphs, and especially by the Romans themselves. Recent events justify this assertion. The inhabitants of Rome have always dreamed of a republic similar to that of ancient times; they gave a favorable reception to the tribunes who called themselves the successors of Brutus, thus seconding the guilty enterprises undertaken by Arnold of Brescia and Cola de Rienzi in the states of the Holy See: in a word, the Romans seemed to forget, or rather to ignore, that the Popes had heretofore given them both political existence and national independence. In truth, however, we must add - and this perhaps explains why the Guelphs are looked upon as the supporters of the Papacy - that the Sovereign Pontiff always favored the Guelphs, strengthened political liberty, and both vigorously and perseveringly opposed the exaggerated pretensions of the German princes.

This intestine struggle engendered two evils, for the cities made war upon one another, while suffering at the same time from the divisions of the two parties, who annoyed each other in every possible manner, carrying their mutual hatred to the extent of publicly manifesting it by difference of dress and domestic habits. No one dared go out of the house unarmed, as no day passed without bodies of murdered citizens being found in the streets. Nothing was talked of save secret conspiracies: the vanquished party, eager to repair its discomfiture, endeavored to keep the victorious side at bay either by force or treachery. The spirit of hatred and discord, penetrating even into the bosom of families, parents and children provoked one another to quarrels; and as if all sort of evils were to fall upon them at once, usury

came to lend its aid, as it were, to political animosity, and thereby insure the ruin of all. We can form some idea of the number of usurers who then infected Italy by remarking the rigorous punishment inflicted on them by the Church.

The wife of a usurer could claim the right of legal separation. Bishops were enjoined to make a strict search after usurers, and if, after three warnings from the ecclesiastical authorities, they did not renounce usury, they were to be excommunicated. They had not the right to make a will, even in favor of convents. They could not be buried in consecrated ground if they persisted in the practice of usury. They were commonly designated by the name of Cahorsins or Lombards. The people called them traffickers in tears. We can truly say that, in the absence of pawnbrokers, or Monte di Pieta, as it was called, at that time an unknown institution, crowds of debtors had only as their last sole refuge the un pitying usurers, who for the most part deprived the unhappy mechanic of his last center, and grew rich upon the tears of the poor. From all this we can easily infer the wretched moral condition of Italy. Hatred, jealousy, and thirst for gold everywhere prevailed: they were in fact the reigning vices of the time. Continual wars favored libertinage. Infamous heresies corrupted their morals, and the constant contact with, as well as the pernicious example of, depraved men, and above all of bad priests, spread licentiousness among the faithful.

An immense field of labor was thus offered to the zeal of apostolic men. There were powerful families to be reconciled, hatred engendered by party strife to be overcome, usurers to be unmasked, and dissolute manners to be curbed. This noble task especially devolved upon the Friar Minors and the Dominicans, the two religious orders who had not as yet relaxed from their primitive fervor. They enjoyed the esteem of the Pope, the princes, and the people.

Their acts were in accordance with their words, since they fought with the same ardor against the vices of the time and their own disorderly inclinations. They voluntarily deprived themselves of all the conveniences of life, and embraced, in loving simplicity, all the cares and labors of the apostolate. They could preach against sin because their hearts were pure and stainless, and could freely and fearlessly condemn the misconduct of the lower orders, since they did not spare the vices of the great; and these latter respected them because no mere human motive shone forth in their conduct: they were strengthened by almighty power, and the spirit of God, that spirit of wisdom which stifles pride, spoke visibly by their mouths. Nothing can be more marvelous than the account given us by the history of the times of the unexpected success and wonderful miracles wrought by many of these missionaries. Of Antony alone, chronicles relate, that when the man of God preached in any one of the neighboring cities, such a concourse of people followed him that the shops were closed and all business was momentarily suspended. The inhabitants of the surrounding places also flocked to hear him. Sometimes, they tell us, that the saint counted thirty thousand people among his audience, and as there was no church capable of containing so vast a multitude, he was frequently obliged to preach the Gospel in the public squares. He was constantly interrupted by the sighs and penitential groans of his hearers. His earnest remonstrances worked the most extraordinary conversions, stifled feelings of hatred and vengeance of long standing, softened hardened hearts, and induced mortal enemies to give each other the kiss of peace before him and in the presence of his numerous auditors. He even succeeded in doing away with usury, and persuading great criminals to repent sincerely of their iniquities, and to become, under his wise and paternal direction, pious and fervent Christians. We meet with many similar examples in the history of the Middle Ages, yet their salutary effects were

not lasting, since they were only experienced by a small number of repentant and converted sinners. Several isolated conversions, however striking they might be, were powerless to extirpate the evil so deeply rooted in the hearts of nations. That party spirit, from which Italy had so much to suffer, took its rise in an exaggerated sentiment of personal dignity and national liberty, which latter could only establish and surely develop itself by the strict union of the Italian States, who had no other means of resisting the German encroachments but community of strength and patriotic feelings. This union was never complete; its very existence was precarious; for, at the moment it seemed on the point of consolidating itself, some fresh discord between some two powerful families would uproot and destroy it.

And yet these preachers rendered immense services to society, by opposing a strong resistance to the torrent of evil; in reconciling families whose disunion retarded the progress of liberty; in ameliorating public manners; and, finally, by protecting the poorer classes against the cupidity of usurers. For, a nation once truly moral and religious, is in the best possible condition to take charge of her political interests. Careful to provide, according to her means, for the wants of the poorer classes, she renders them less liable to sedition and revolt, and thus establishes her public repose upon a firm and solid basis.

We must not, however, conclude, from what has just been said, that the Popes, instead of co-operating personally in the civilization of the lower orders, gave up the entire care of it to zealous missionaries. Honorius III, regulating his conduct upon the great designs of Gregory VII and Innocent III, applied himself to make use of his increasing influence over princes, to serve the needs, both spiritual and temporal, of the flock committed to his pastoral care. He adopted the expedient of a new Crusade, and unceasingly

urged the Emperor Frederick II to fulfill his promise of undertaking an expedition against the Saracens. However, the situation of Europe was not less dangerous or less threatening than that of Syria. Heretics were devastating the Lord's vineyard, both by cunning and by open violence, and the Pope was frequently compelled to accept the emperor's assistance against those obstinate rebels who attacked at once the throne and the altar.

Immediately after his coronation, in 1220, Frederick II promulgated a very severe law against heretics, which law received a new and more severe character when, in 1224, he added to it the pain of death against heretics, with degradation to their descendants; this law was followed by a decree which condemned the Patarins to the flames; and finally he put in force the fourth Canon of the Council of Lateran, by which banishment for life was substituted for excommunication. It was at the time of his rigorous measures for the suppression and punishment of heresy, that that prince took under his special protection the Friars Minor and Dominicans, who were proceeding against the heretics in the name and under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Villani attests that the Popes opposed the religious orders as a solid rampart against the furious attacks of the heretics, and adds that, aided by their brethren of Florence, Milan, etc., they succeeded in extirpating the most pernicious errors in various parts of the country.

At the commencement of the latter half of the twelfth century, the religious state presented itself to the world in a new phase. Up to that time the rules of the various orders merely prescribed a solitary life, accompanied by prayer and private instruction in the sciences. The numerous religious communities occupied themselves in copying manuscripts, in the instruction of youth, and in preparing writings upon

religion and the interior life. Some holy personages quitted their cloisters, from time to time, either to preach the faith to the infidels, like the monks of Fulda and Corby, or to defend the Church, like Saint Bernard; but these were exceptional vocations, for at that time there was no religious order whose exclusive end was to form zealous missionaries and good preachers. It had, however, become necessary to found Orders, under the exclusive control of the Sovereign Pontiff, who should devote themselves entirely to defending the interests of the Church, and to the reformation of public morals, the more especially as Europe was overrun with heretics, and the German emperors, arrogating to themselves various rights, particularly that of investitures, instituted bishops, who were warriors rather than apostles, and who were frequently devoted heart and soul to the secular powers. This necessity alone caused the formation of several religious orders, who were wholly exempted from episcopal jurisdiction.

Innocent III, therefore, gave his solemn approbation to several orders whose principal mission was to consecrate themselves to the service of their neighbor in every possible way, but more especially by preaching the Gospel. The canons of Prémontré endeavored to fight against heresy in the North of Europe, and by so doing to civilize them, while the Dominicans, the Friars Minor, and the Carmelites attempted a similar work in the South. These different monastic laborers soon established themselves in every part of the then-known world, and increased with wonderful rapidity; and if any one wishes fully to understand the utility of these religious institutions, let him examine with an unprejudiced mind, on the one side, their end and the circumstances from which they took their rise, and on the other side, their inappreciable advantages toward society, which they can easily verify by referring to the preceding chapters

But it is time to return to our saint, and to follow him in his apostolic career throughout Italy.

Chapter XI

Antony Returns to Italy - The Albigenses and the Preachers in the South of France - A Tempest Forces Antony, for the Second Time in his Life, to Land in Sicily - Moral Condition of that Country - Antony Founds Three Convents - His Sanctity Confirmed by a Miracle - Circular Letter from the Vicar-General to all the Friars Minor - Death of Saint Francis

Antony, having received orders from the Minister-General to return to Italy, took leave of his brethren at Limoges, and set out with his companion. As they went on foot, only using a horse or carriage in case of necessity, the road which separated them from the port at which they were to embark would have seemed very long to them both, had not his edifying instructions, diversified by ardent prayer, caused the hours to pass by with great rapidity. This saint was always closely united with God, notwithstanding his numerous anxieties and occupations. He walked ever in God's sight, to avoid stumbling on the rough road of life, and thus preserved himself from dangerous falls. In his tender communications with Jesus, he had learned that a priest does not so readily sanctify himself in co-operating in the salvation of others as by endeavoring to become more perfect himself, and, consequently, better calculated to labor successfully in the Lord's vineyard. A priest who does not live in union with God, and whose soul does not burn with the fire of Divine love, is only, according to the words of Saint Paul, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal: while leading others to God, he withdraws himself from Him, and keeps himself in infirmity and poverty while distributing to those around him the treasures of the Church.

As Antony fully understood these truths, he armed himself with prudence and circumspection, when duty called him into the midst of the world. Thus he had acquired a habit of praying while traveling, and if condescension or politeness required him to interrupt his prayer to converse for a while with his companion, he spoke to him of God and of eternal things, in order, by similar pious discourse, to keep alive that supernatural fire which burned in his soul, and to enkindle it in that of his brother in religion.

Our two travelers, aided by Divine protection, drew near their port of embarkation, which was probably that of Aigues-Mortes. No accident had befallen them on their way, although at that time the public roads of Languedoc were very unsafe. The Count Raymond of Toulouse had forgotten his formal and oft-reiterated promise to the Holy See to keep the Albigenses in check, and, if possible, quietly expel them from his dominions; but if he did not protect them openly, he at least secretly favored them. His apparent forgetfulness of his promise emboldened the Albigenses, who, lifting up their heads afresh, rallied together in various places to recommence their warlike demonstrations. Unhappy Provence uttered a loud cry of distress; the Catholics, suffering anew from the sword of persecution, implored the assistance of the neighboring princes, and informed the Pope of the culpable conduct of Raymond. Honorius III and the other Catholic powers were highly incensed against the count, regarding all these fresh evils as the fruits of his perjury; and they were not mistaken in their view.

The Pope, now fully convinced of Raymond's perfidy, laid his complaints before Louis VIII, king of France, whose vassal the count was; the latter immediately made preparations for war, and resolved to proclaim a crusade against the Albigenses at the approaching National Council, which was to be held in the month of January of the following year.

About this time the Children of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis were performing immense labors in the South of France, where both Orders possessed several convents. Their quality of preachers, and the sacred engagements they had made to fight unceasingly against heresy, obliged them, even in the most dangerous circumstances, to mount the breach in order to save the faithful. Their office was to console and encourage the victims of persecution, and sometimes to resolve cheerfully to raise their voices against armed heretics, who, respecting no one, not infrequently massacred all the Catholics who fell into their hands, without any distinction of sex, age, or rank, and were specially bitter against monks and priests. The holy missionaries never failed in their duty: far from fearing a death so precious in the sight of God, they longed to shed their blood for His glory and for the salvation of their fellow-men, and joyfully laid down their lives in the defense of the Holy Church. Antony would gladly have joined his efforts to those of his brethren to stop the progress of heresy, but the will of his superiors forced him to abandon his project. He consoled himself for so painful a sacrifice by offering it to God, and hastened to fulfill the charges holy obedience imposed upon him, convinced that as it is from God alone that man can receive the reward of his good works, he would be guilty of great rashness should he undertake any enterprise, however praiseworthy in itself, which might not accord with the views of Divine Providence in his behalf.

The two Friars Minor, reaching the Mediterranean, set sail under favorable auspices. But Antony did not reach his province so quickly as he desired. At the very moment when the shores of Italy were distinguishable, the waves were violently agitated, and, soon after, a contrary wind arose which drove the vessel out to sea again. The tempest lasted several days, rendering all working of the ship impossible, and it was only after a long and dangerous navigation along

the southern coast that they were enabled to land in Sicily. Antony thanked God for having preserved him from shipwreck, adored His wise designs, and set out on foot through an unknown country to seek a convent of his order. The chroniclers do not mention the community among whom he first rested, but it is no less certain that the Sicilian friars received him with the utmost joy as a messenger from God, who would render them great assistance in extending their recently formed province, and in reforming the manners of the people. The moral situation of Sicily at that time was deplorable. That country, formerly so flourishing, but just then devastated and exhausted by a long and bloody struggle between two factions, bitterly opposed to each other and mutually aspiring to the crown, at last enjoyed a short repose under the reign of Frederick. But the return of peaceful and happy times was soon marked by the fresh and fearful progress of vice and public corruption. Sicily presented a safe and easy refuge for the Moors of Africa, who found in the then-reigning monarch a highly poetical mind ripe for all chivalrous adventures. He, on his side, admired and esteemed the Arabs for their delicacy of feeling and lively imagination. The Moors were thus enabled to establish themselves in his kingdom without the least opposition, form alliances with the natives, and share in all public offices. The woods and hills of Sicily soon resounded with voluptuous erotic songs, which, translated into the national language, found everywhere their faithful echo, in the palaces of the rich as well as in the huts of the laboring classes, and soon became the true expression of the sentiments and manners of the frivolous Sicilians. Time passed on, and still matters grew worse. When King Frederick had become emperor of Germany, he frequently chose the country of his birth as the place of his residence. He established his court in the voluptuous city of Messina, and lived in Oriental luxury; his palace might well have been taken for that of a sultan. There he enjoyed, in the

society of the Arabian men of letters, those enervating pleasures peculiar to a warm southern climate. No words can portray the incalculable evils his scandalous life wrought among his subjects: it is sufficient to read the accounts of his manners and opinions given by his historiographers to form some idea of the sad state of his kingdom. It was in the midst of such disheartening circumstances that Antony landed in Sicily. Our saint did not wait for an invitation to begin his office of preaching to the faithful, his ardent zeal for souls impelling him to instant action. Here, as elsewhere, his word was powerful in its efficacy. Not only did he contrive to diminish the general corruption of morals in a most surprising degree, but he even succeeded in founding several convents of his order. He first founded that of Cefala, where he planted a cypress-tree, which still flourishes after many hundred years, then a second one at Noto. He further established a residence for his brethren at Leontine, which was converted into a large convent by Pope Alexander IV in 1255.

While preaching at Patti, where the marvelous effects of his sermons had gained him the esteem and friendship of the bishop, Antony became an object of hatred to those men whose misconduct could not brook the contrast of so much piety and virtue. One of the latter, wishing to test the sanctity of the man of God, and thinking perhaps to find in his conduct something worthy of blame, invited him to dine with him on a Friday. When the dinner was served he placed before him nothing but fowls, telling him that if he really wished to practice evangelical perfection, he should eat whatever was set before him. There, however, was a gross sophism, since the order given by Jesus Christ in the Gospel to His apostles to eat the meats set before them - an order which Saint Francis transmitted to his religious - has an entirely different meaning. That order, or, to speak more properly, that permission, says Saint Bonaventure, is

evidently not given to enable us to transgress the laws of Christian temperance with greater impunity, nor to permit us to nourish ourselves more delicately; but merely to teach us to spare trouble to those who show us hospitality, by not requiring special dishes to be provided for us: such an order perfectly agreeing with our vow of poverty, since, as we possess nothing, and cannot receive money, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to choose our dishes according to our particular tastes; for that reason we are allowed to accept such food as is set before us, which signifies that on fast-days we can eat any thing not forbidden by the rule of abstinence, and that upon other days we can eat any manner of food allowed to Christian people. Although Antony understood the evangelical permission in its rightful sense, he determined to eat of the fowls, either because his bodily weakness authorized him to eat meat upon fast-days, or because he had been ordered by his superiors to use more substantial food. His host, rejoicing to have found means to prove Antony a hypocrite, immediately upon the latter's departure from his house hurried at once to the bishop's presence, to show him the remains of the fowl, and thereby convince him that the Friar Minor could not be so holy as he was generally thought to be, since he exempted himself from the observances prescribed by the Church. Such an allegation was of course pure calumny, since Antony had undoubtedly informed his host of his reasons for eating the fowl upon a fast-day, the more especially as he was so fully convinced of the enormity of the sin of scandal that he would rather omit a good work than perform it under circumstances so calculated to do harm to others.

God, therefore, wrought a miracle to avenge the outraged honor of His servant, and to overwhelm his calumniator with shame and confusion; for when the latter presented the remnants of the fowl to the bishop, nothing was seen but some fish-bones. We can easily imagine the embarrassment

of the accuser, as well as the joy of the bishop, who tenderly loved Antony, and blessed God for having avenged his wrongs so admirably. The news of this prodigy, spreading quickly abroad, greatly increased the popular confidence in our saint, multiplied the powerful effects of his zeal for the reformation of morals, and added to his personal renown. Sicily was soon to be deprived of the presence of Antony: the provincial of that country, having certain affairs of importance to be transacted at Rome, and judging Antony the most fitting person to fill that charge, ordered him to cease his sermons, and to set out immediately for Rome.

He resided in Sicily until the year 1227. The annals of the order tell us nothing more of his other actions in that kingdom; but about that time great events were taking place among the Friars Minor.

Toward the close of the year 1226, the general, Brother Elias, sent a circular letter to Sicily, by which he informed all the Friars Minor of the death of their dearly loved father, Saint Francis

"He," wrote he, "who was loved by God and man, who sought Jacob, the law of life, and the precepts of morality, and who procured peace for Israel, has been snatched from here below, to enter into the light of Heaven. We should rejoice for him, and mourn for ourselves, who are left in the darkness and shadows of death. This misfortune, common to us all, falls more heavily upon me, since, in giving me up to my own weakness, it takes from me a sure guide, at the very time when a thousand different occupations overwhelm me with care; and when the weight of my office greatly oppresses me. Weep for me, then, dear brethren, my sorrow is great; and I also pity you, become orphans, like myself, and having, like me, lost the light of your eyes! Yes, the presence of Francis, who was at once our brother and our

father, was truly a light for us who lived under his rule, and also for a great number of persons differing from us both by their vocation and manner of life. He was a light shining with that true light which was to enlighten those who walked in the shadow of death, to guide their steps into the way of peace. He has fulfilled his mission; for the true Sun, sending down His most ardent rays upon him from the highest heaven, inundated his soul with His light, and inflamed his will with Divine love; therefore he preached the law of God, re-established peace between parents and children, made wisdom truly admirable in the sight of the guilty and perverse, and thus formed for the Lord a new people. His name is spread abroad to the most distant parts of the world, and all nations admire his miracles.

"I beg you, then, my sons and brethren, to moderate your sorrow, for the Father of Orphans, our good and loving God, will aid us with His sweet and powerful consolations; if you sigh, let it be for yourselves, and not for him, for he has passed from death unto life, while we are surrounded by death, even in the midst of life. Let us rather rejoice, since, like another Jacob, he blessed his dear children from his bed of death, and pardoned any among them who might have offended him, either by thought or action.

"Now listen to the account of a new miracle, which cannot fail to gladden your hearts. The same has never been related of any one except the Son of God - of Jesus Christ, who is also God. A short time previous to the death of our brother and father, one would have said he had been, as it were, crucified: his body bore five wounds, inflicted thereon by Jesus Christ himself; the black nails which pierced his hands and feet were easily distinguishable; his left side seemed to have been opened by a lance, and was frequently wet with the blood which oozed from it. His body was emaciated and exhausted, and he had suffered in every limb to such a

degree that the constant contraction of the nerves had rendered them as rigid as those of a corpse. Nevertheless, after death, his body appeared fresh and natural; it was of a brilliant whiteness, and charmed all by its beauty. His limbs, lately so rigid, became so pliable that they were as easily bent as those of a young child.

"Therefore, dear brethren, thank the God of Heaven, and exalt His name throughout the whole world, for His mercy has been showered down upon you. Remember our brother and father, Francis, in order to glorify Him who has so honored him in the sight of men and of angels. Pray for him, for he asked our prayers, and beg him to obtain for us from God that grace by which he sanctified himself. Amen.

"It was on Sunday, the 4th of October, at one o'clock at night, that our father and brother Francis ended this mortal life, and began that of eternity. Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, when you receive and read this circular, imitate the people of Israel, who bitterly deplored the loss of their chiefs, Moses and Aaron, and give free course to your tears, since we are deprived of the sweet and consoling presence of our father. For, if it be good to rejoice with Francis, it is equally so to mourn his death. Truly we have reason to congratulate him, as we cannot call it dying to enter into the abode of celestial happiness carrying our reward with us. We have also reason to deplore his loss, which renders us orphans, since death deprives us in his person of a second Aaron, who, living in fraternity with us, shared with us all his treasures and consoled us in all our sorrows. But since it is written: The poor are confided to your care, you shall be the consoler of the orphan, pray and beseech Heaven, dear brethren, that God, having broken the earthly vase in our valley of Adam, will deign to grant us a man after His own heart, to direct our community and to walk before us in the fight like another Machabaeus. And as it is always salutary

to pray for the dead, you will pray for the repose of the soul of our father. The priests will say three masses, the clerics will recite the Psalter, and the lay brothers will say five Pater Nosters. The clerics will also sing the office of the dead. Amen.

"BROTHER ELIAS, A SINNER."

Great was the affliction and consternation of the Friars Minor upon hearing the news of the death of their beloved father. Although they had long foreseen their loss, and Francis himself had told them that his end was approaching, they could not actually believe that he had really quitted them. But alas! his death was a certainty; his career was finished; he had died the glorious death of the just; he had accomplished God's designs upon him; and after having placed in his hands the interests of his order, he had gone to receive from his Savior that crown of glory which He bestows upon him who fights valiantly in the cause of truth and justice. A few days before his death he called all the brothers of his convent about him, in order to give to each one in turn his last blessing. The religious burst into tears while kneeling around his miserable pallet. The dying saint then, placing his left hand on the head of the Vicar-General, who was kneeling before him, asked who he was, as his dying eyes could no longer distinguish his features, They told him it was Brother Elias.

"Good," said he; "you are the one upon whom my hand should rest. My son, I bless you among all, and above all; and in blessing you I also bless all of the brethren, whom the Most High has multiplied under your direction. May God, the King of all, bless you in Heaven and on Earth! I bless you according to my power and above it, and may He, who can do all things, deign to grant you all that is not in my power to bestow! May God remember your fatigues and labors, and

give you as a recompense the reward of the just! May you obtain all the graces which you desire! May you see all your desires accomplished, provided they are conformable to the will of God!"

God sanctioned that benediction. He fulfilled the vows made by our saint on his dying bed, for the future happiness of a man who, it is true, was destined later to fall into deplorable enormities, but who, thanks to that same blessing given by the best of Fathers, would be saved from eternal reprobation.

On the 4th of October, Francis again called his dear children around him, to bid them a final adieu. He exhorted them to a strict observance of the holy poverty which he had taught them, and gave them his last instructions in the form of a testament, which Brother Angelus wrote from his dictation, after which he desired the same brother, with the assistance of Brother Leo, to intone the Hymn to the Sun, which he had himself composed: after that canticle he once more blessed the brethren, saying these words: "Live happily, my children, live happily in the fear of the Lord, and remain firm in his service! Happy those who shall generously pursue their mission in the midst of the trials and afflictions which are soon to burst upon you! As for me, I long to go to God, and I recommend you all to his Divine grace." When Francis had ceased speaking, he caused the beginning of the Passion, according to the Evangelist Saint John, to be read aloud; then, after having joyfully chanted the one hundred and forty-first Psalm, he quietly slept in the Lord, in the forty-fifth year of his age, eighteen years after the foundation of his order.

Immediately after the death of Saint Francis, Brother Elias, in his office of vicar-general, assumed the administration of the order, until the assembling of the next general chapter,

which was fixed for Pentecost week of the following year,
1227.

Chapter XII

The Authority of the Popes, and the Policy of the German Emperors - Honorius III and Frederick II - Gregory IX - Antony Preaches in Rome - A Crusade Abandoned - The Saracens in the Papal States - Flight of the Sovereign Pontiff from Rome

Rarely had the Church found herself in so critical a position as that in which she was, at the time of which we are writing. She had been long struggling against the kings of Germany, who, priding themselves upon their title of Roman emperors, were eager to assert their sovereign dominion over all other powers, and unceasingly aspired to attain to the absolute power possessed by the pagan Caesars, which would have invested them with the double supremacy in religious as well as temporal affairs: that was the ideal object of their wishes, which led them to regard themselves as the natural suzerains of all other princes, and induced them to endeavor to restrict, as far as lay in their power, all exercise of religious authority throughout their dominions.

The Holy See could not tolerate such conduct; for if, on one side, the Popes were required to guard intact the spiritual authority of the Church, on the other side the general opinion, as well as the rights of men at that time, permitted them, in their quality of father and protector of Christendom, to exercise a certain surveillance over the temporal interests of Christian kingdoms. Thus the power of the Sovereign Pontiffs served as some sort of check to the illegal pretensions of the emperors. From the time of Gregory VII, the Popes had defended the rights of the Church with true apostolic zeal, never yielding to the usurpation of tyrants: never before, perhaps, had they to struggle against so dangerous an enemy as Frederick II. That prince, a pupil of

Innocent III, and raised to the throne through his means, proved that he in nowise differed from his predecessors, save in greater hypocrisy and craftiness. To the brutal and savage courage of his grandfather, Frederick Barbarossa, he joined true Grecian perfidy, and his manners were no less licentious than those of his Arabian allies.

Such was the adversary of Honorius III. But the firmness of character peculiar to the successors of Saint Peter was not wanting even here. Honorius, although naturally mild and accommodating, vigorously and constantly opposed all Frederick's perfidious designs. He delayed the latter's coronation several years, and only consented to perform the ceremony upon his double promise to take part in the Crusades, and to endeavor to drive out all heretics from his dominions. Frederick readily promised all, but with a secret determination to evade the fulfillment of his word. As we have seen, he did, indeed, pass some laws against heresy; but he merely contented himself with their promulgation, for he was too careless of the spiritual interest of his subjects to see that they were put in force.

Honorius died on the 18th of March, in the year 1227, after having effected the reconciliation of the Emperor, both with the cities of Lombardy and with his father-in-law, the King of Jerusalem. The day following his death, the cardinals chose as his successor the cardinal bishop of Ostia, Ugolino de Segni, nephew of Pope Innocent III, a venerable man, eighty years of age, who took the name of Gregory IX. Frederick flattered himself that he could act as he wished toward the new Pope, who seemed to him weakened by old age. But he found himself greatly deceived, as Gregory, notwithstanding his years, showing all the strength of mind of a man in the prime of life, proved far less yielding toward the Emperor than even the Pope who had preceded him.

To give some idea of the character of Gregory, we need only remark that he was always the intimate friend of Saint Francis, who had been greatly attached to him while he was simply a cardinal. Like himself, Ugolino was given to mental prayer, and fond of contemplating God in the wonders of nature and the ineffable delights of solitude. His taste for poetry did not lead him, like Frederick, toward earthly things, but, on the contrary, made him long for those intimate conversations with God, of which mystical theology is but an eloquent echo. Though endowed by nature with great sweetness and sensibility, he could evince great strength of will and inflexible determination where there was question of maintaining his own rights or defending those of the Church; and being further gifted with great learning, experienced in politics, and thoroughly versed in canon law, he was enabled to foresee and readily avoid all the snares so cunningly laid for him by Frederick.

Gregory, from having taken considerable part in the management of public affairs under both Innocent III and Honorius III, had become very skillful in pursuing the true policy of these two great Pontiffs, and, upon accepting the tiara, began at once to carry out the wise designs of his predecessors. His first care was to oblige the emperor to keep his promise of setting out for the Holy Land, while he himself prepared to exhort his subjects to follow him on his glorious expedition.

About that time, the Provincial of Sicily sent Antony to Rome, in order to attend to certain affairs relative to the Sicilian province, and to act as his deputy at the approaching chapter of the order. The Pope, formerly the friend of Saint Francis, and now the zealous protector of the Friars Minor, knowing all the members of the order, and especially Antony, whose renown was spread over all Italy, took advantage of the presence of the latter in Rome to

order him to preach before the strangers who had gathered there from all parts of the world, to gain the indulgences granted to the faithful during the Paschal season. It is probable that the Pope took advantage of the eloquence of Antony to preach the Crusade, and, after the example of his predecessors, he employed the indulgence as a means to further its success; as the crowds flocking to Rome, for the purpose of gaining indulgences, at a time when the Church was less liberal in granting them than she is in our days, served as a fortunate circumstance to increase the number of the crusaders. Gregory himself, with all his cardinals, assisted at the sermons of the holy Friar Minor, as he desired to be a witness of the wonders everywhere performed by the zeal of this second Francis; and his desire was granted to its fullest extent.

Antony explained the mysterious sense of the Holy Scriptures so clearly, and with such sublime eloquence, that the Pope cried out, in a transport of admiration: "This man is truly the Ark of the Testament!" "It was the peculiar talent of this man of God," says Wadding, "to give to his sermons the importance and character appropriate to the truth then under discussion, using toward his hearers either gentleness or severity as circumstances required, thus filling them alternately with fear and love. Men of letters admired his rare perspicacity, his great eloquence, and his uncommon aptness in choosing and weighing his expressions with prudence and discernment. Persons of high rank remarked with astonishment the solicitude with which he compared spiritual things with spiritual, and the poor wondered at the talent with which he pointed out the cause and occasions of vice, prescribed the remedies against it, and preached reformation of morals. In a word, all his auditors, whatever their age or condition, could gather instruction from his sermons. The Pope had justly styled him the Ark of the Testament, as he knew the whole Bible so perfectly by heart,

that, had it been lost or destroyed, he could, like another Esdras, have rewritten it from memory. Such are the wonders related of Antony by those who knew him well and had frequent opportunities of seeing him.

It was probably about the same time that our Lord renewed in his favor the miracle by which He had formerly glorified his apostles at the solemnity of Pentecost, since numerous witnesses attest that, though his sermons were delivered in Italian, they were perfectly understood by men of all the various languages then congregated in Rome.

Gregory IX had reason to congratulate himself for having appointed our saint to preach the Divine Word. His efforts to organize and set on foot a Crusade were crowned with success, at least in Rome. Other countries showed themselves disposed to second so noble a design; but it could not be carried into effect so long as the Emperor refused to take command of the crusaders, and there was no hope that he would ever be willing to assume so great a burden. Frederick always found some pretext to defer the Crusade in which he had so frequently promised to take part. His political interests, to which he always made those of religion subservient, led him to shun a war against the Mussulman. He desired to live at peace with the infidels, in order to have some claim to their assistance in case of need, particularly in the contestations which might arise relative to Southern Italy or Sicily. He was strongly suspected of being as much attached to the errors of Mohammedanism as to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Whatever be the truth of that charge, it is certain that his public misconduct, as well as his confidence in such a personage as Peter des Vignes, leave great room to doubt of the orthodoxy of his religious principles.

The Pope, knowing that Frederick, notwithstanding his impiety, feared the ecclesiastical censures, because they served to weaken the attachment of the people toward those princes upon whom the Church inflicted them, resolved to have recourse to them as a last means to interest him in the success of the Crusades. He therefore ordered the Emperor to be ready to put to sea with a fleet before the end of the month of August of that same year, adding that, should he delay longer than that period to fulfill his engagements toward the Holy See, he should be excommunicated without further warning.

Frederick promised obedience, and convoked an army, which was to be ready at Brindisi toward the feast of the Assumption. A great number of princes repaired thither upon his invitation: among the German knights who took the cross at the time was Louis of Thuringia, the husband of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a young and pious prince, who was destined never again to see his cherished spouse after he had once set out for the East, and who, by his premature death, was to be exposed to the cruel persecutions of his nearest relatives.

Frederick's fleet was not long in raising anchor, and, leaving the Adriatic Gulf, sailed along the coast of Italy. But after maneuvering for a few days, the emperor, under pretense of sickness, lauded at Otranto, where many of the crusaders left him. The Pope, who immediately penetrated the hidden designs of Frederick, convoked his cardinals on the 29th of September, and fulminated the sentence of excommunication against him in their presence, forbidding at the same time the celebration of the holy mysteries in any place where that perjured monarch might be.

Then Frederick threw off the mask, and war breaking out between the Pope and himself his troops, increased by those

of the infidels, thenceforth his sworn allies, made an invasion into the Papal States. The following year he dared, in open contempt of the anathema pronounced against him, to set out for Asia, whither he was followed by two Friars Minors, in quality of legates of the Holy See, to inform the Patriarch of Jerusalem of his having ceased to form part of the communion of the faithful. He paid no attention to the motive which took the religious to the Holy Land. He usurped the throne of Jerusalem, which belonged to John de Brienne, his father-in-law, and proclaimed himself king; and, in place of fighting against the Saracens, he concluded a shameful peace with Meleddin, sultan of Egypt, and declared war against the Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers, who, by order of the Pope, had refused him obedience.

In the mean time, the Pope had been forced to quit the city of Rome. The Ghibbelines, excited by Frederick and commanded by the Frangipani, a powerful Roman family, raising their heads, had, by threats and reiterated bad treatment, constrained him to seek an asylum out of his capital.

We will now leave these historical details, and, returning to the history of our saint, will relate what happened at the chapter of the Friars Minor, which had been fixed for the time of Pentecost in the year 1227.

Chapter XIII

General Chapter of the Friars Minor - Elias of Cortona - Antony is Named Superior of a Convent in France

Gregory IX, while yet cardinal and bishop of Ostia, yielding to the urgent desire of Saint Francis, had accepted the charge of protector of the Friars Minor. The illustrious founder sought to place his order in immediate dependence on the Pope, because he foresaw that should his religious be dependent upon the bishops, they would have much to suffer from such among the latter, who should not be in good understanding with the court of Rome.

Events fully justified this wise provision; for, from the year 1225, Honorius had had constantly to defend the Friars Minor against several French bishops, who denied them the exercise of the privileges he had himself granted them.

But, as it was clearly impossible that the Pope could always continue to charge himself with the protection and immediate defense of the order of the Friars Minor, Saint Francis ordered in his rule, and established the custom, of begging the Holy Father to appoint one of the cardinals to replace him in the functions of that double charge, which custom had always been, and is to this day, faithfully observed by his children. No one could better replace the Pope in his office of protector than Cardinal Ugolino de Segni. He was as faithfully attached to the order of Saint Francis as if he had himself been its founder, and looked upon the Friars Minor as his beloved children; and it was to him that they were indebted, if not for their rapid growth, at least for the esteem and high consideration which the budding order enjoyed at the Holy See.

Raised to the Pontifical Chair, he continued his immediate protection to the religious of Saint Francis during the first year of his pontificate, and only relinquished it in the month of December, 1227, in favor of his nephew Rinaldo de Segni, to whom he earnestly recommended to watch with great solicitude over the interests of the Friars Minor.

Gregory had, during the first days of his reign, made known his intention, in his quality of protector of the order of Saint Francis, to preside at the general chapter, and take an active part in the election of a new general. On the eve of the vigil of Pentecost he repaired to the convent of Friars Minor in Rome; and as he found all the Provincials of the order had arrived there, he immediately opened the session. The assembled superiors were far from being unanimous as to the candidate to be promoted to the generalate; the greater part, however, destined their votes for Brother Elias, although the latter had frequently given cause for the good religious to raise complaints against him.

Elias of Cortona was recommendable for rare capacity, skillful prudence in directing his subordinates, and by the possession of all those qualities which gain for a superior the love of those whom he governs. Deeply learned, and fond of the fine arts, he sought by every means in his power to extend and promote ecclesiastical studies in all the communities of his order. His manners were noble, yet full of gravity; he was filled with zeal for the purity of morals, and indefatigable in defending the rights of the Church. All these fine qualities combined would have made him a most venerable and respected personage, had their brilliancy been further increased by religious humility. But he appeared more desirous to distinguish himself by the external charms of nature than solicitous to acquire that interior spirit which forms the saints. His excessive desire of meriting the esteem of the world, as well for himself as for

his order, led him to change his former grave manners into studied pomposity: he carried his love of science to so great an extent that, by reason of inciting his religious to study, he had soon well-nigh stifled among them every sentiment of piety and humility. Added to all this, he looked upon the rule of Saint Francis as the ideal of a perfection toward which the Friars Minor should endeavor, it is true, to conform all their actions as far as lay in their power, but which required such eminent virtue, so complete a detachment from all things, that its perfect fulfillment was incompatible with the weakness of poor human nature, and he unceasingly importuned the court of Rome to grant privileges and dispensations which were contrary to the statutes of his rule.

Such conduct was in direct opposition to the last wishes of the holy founder, who solemnly declared, a few moments before his death, that he exacted from all his children a most strict conformity to the letter of the rule, forbidding all, under pain of disobedience, from soliciting from the Pope any favor or privilege which was contrary to its requirements.

We trust no one will accuse us of too great severity toward Brother Elias: we do not seek to criminate his intentions, God alone can judge of them truly; nevertheless, we grieve sincerely that a man endowed with such wonderful talent should have shown himself so attached to his own opinions as ever to prefer his own judgment to that of others, even of the most saintly personages; and that he should, by this same rock, self-confidence, have greatly imperiled the existence of the rising congregation committed to his care.

Saint Francis had himself chosen Brother Elias as superior general of his brethren, although he foresaw by revelation that he would one day leave the order. The holy founder well

knew that during his own life no human means could oppose any obstacle to the strict observance of his rule; and furthermore, that the struggle between fervor and laxity, especially in a newly established order, was rather of an advantage than otherwise, since it serves to test and strengthen the virtue of the good, and renders the triumph of exactitude, which commonly follows, more striking and brilliant. Most of the brethren thought seriously of re-electing Brother Elias, but as their Father Francis would no longer be at hand to warn him of the faults he was likely to commit in the exercise of his high functions, many of the more perfect religious were resolved to oppose his renomination. Brother Elias himself sought to decline the generalship, urging his request upon his frail state of health, which would incapacitate him for so weighty a charge. Every one was greatly surprised by this decision of the vicar-general. It served even to shake the resolve of those who had determined to vote against him, while his numerous admirers, being highly edified, and seeing in it only a fresh instance of his great modesty and humility, were more than ever anxious to induce him to accept the office of general. They therefore told him that the rule did not require impossibilities; that a religious, when dispensed from certain obligations from ill health or any other well-grounded reason, could just as well live up to his rule as if he fulfilled all its requirements; and that it would be far better, did his infirmities demand it, that he should use a horse and possess money, than that he should resign the administration of the order of the Friars Minor.

Brother Elias did not persist in refusing the dignity of general; he accepted it at once when the Pope added his entreaties to those of the brethren and granted him the dispensations they petitioned for in his behalf.

After the election, the Friars Minor entreated the Pope to proceed to the canonization of their holy founder, basing their request upon the innumerable miracles daily wrought through his powerful intercession before God. Gregory, who had long before decided to canonize Saint Francis of Assissium, readily promised to begin the requisite canonical proceedings, and fixed the solemnity for the following year. At the same assembly Saint Antony was named guardian of the convent of Puy, situated in the South of France. The Pope, seeing in him a second Francis of Assissium, wished greatly to keep him near his person; but his solicitude for all Christendom, as well as the sad state of religious affairs in France, determined him to send him into the latter country, looking upon him as the one best calculated to do good among the inhabitants; he was already held in the greatest esteem throughout that province, being looked upon as the scourge of heretics and the terror of tyrants; while his tender remonstrances touched even the most unfeeling and obstinate hearts; thus no one could doubt of the success of his labors in that devastated portion of the Lord's kingdom.

Antony, ever submissive to his superiors, did not hesitate to accept his new charge. Previously to starting for France, he finished a mission in Italy which gained him the blessing of the people, and brought his name in repute even in profane history, as we will relate in the following chapter.

Chapter XIV

Ezzelino III, Tyrant of Verona - Antony the Defender of his Fellow-Citizens - Influence of Religious Ideas upon the Popular Mind During the Middle Ages - Ezzelino Puts the Sanctity of Antony to the Proof - Death of Ezzelino

We find a double element in the history of the Middle Ages: that of holiness and that of barbarity. If, on one side, the Church then offered many examples of eminent virtue, as at that time men easily inclined toward extreme opinions, and were yet ignorant of that subtle reasoning, by the aid of which many endeavor, even in the spiritual life, to reconcile sensuality and self-love with the practice of Christian perfection; on the other hand, society harbored within her bosom many monsters of cruelty, because religion had not then succeeded in enlightening the world to the degree of correcting and softening its harsh and cruel manners.

We find amid the crowned wretches who tendered themselves famous, even in those times, for their violence and cruelty, a savage man and execrable tyrant, who surpassed in cruelty the greatest despots, and whose name is written in letters of blood in the history of Italy. The name of Ezzelino or Azzelino di Romano will never be forgotten; but no one will ever speak of that wretched man save to reproach him with the harrowing cries of the innumerable victims of his sanguinary disposition, to brand his memory among all nations, and to perpetuate the remembrance of his acts of incredible barbarity.

Ezzelino III, lord of Onara and Romano, was descended from a German family who had established themselves in Italy during the reign of the Emperor Conrad, about the year 1137, and had successively acquired several vast domains

in the March of Treviso. His father, Ezzelino II, surnamed the Monk, gave him the principalities of Bassano and Marostica, as well as the family castles, which were situated in the midst of the Enganeen Mountains. His younger brother, Alberic, received some possessions in the March of Treviso. After Ezzelino II had made this division of his estates, he retired into solitude, and soon after gave up the administration of all his affairs to his eldest son.

Ezzelino III soon found his father's domains too small, as he craved greater power than fell to his share. Although imbued with democratic principles, and better calculated for the office of tribune than the dignity of prince, he had long since espoused the cause of the emperors, and placed himself at the head of the Ghibelline party in Italy. We cannot decide whether it was the force of conviction or his hatred for the clergy and desire to extend his authority which thus led him to take part so openly against the Guelphs. We need only say that, as he soon showed himself as indifferent to the interests of the people as to those of the priests and nobles, we may judge that a desire to increase and extend his power and dignity proved the sole and constant motive-power of his whole conduct.

Desirous to obtain the sovereignty of the whole of Northern Italy, he set to work in 1225 to procure for himself the office of Podestat of Verona, hoping that that dignity would serve him as the stepping-stone toward absolute power. The success of his ambitious efforts seemed doubtful: contrary opinions divided the Veronese into three parties, each one favoring a different candidate for the office of chief Magistrate. The nobles were in favor of the margrave of Este, whose family were closely allied with that of Romano; the free citizens ardently upheld the right of the Salin guerra, while the merchants and tradesmen were devoted to the party of Ezzelino. The latter hastily assembled his troops,

took the field against his competitors, and quickly defeated them. His partisans, emboldened by his victory, brought him within their walls, and forced him upon the inhabitants as their Podestat. As to the nobles, they intrenched themselves within their strongholds. Ezzelino had not, as yet, attained his aim; as the people had been previously opposed to his rule, he feared that, according to the custom of the Italian cities, they would soon choose a chief, *capitaneus populi*, whose office was to keep the authority of the podestat within certain limits. He felt that until he should be invested with this second dignity, his work was but begun, and he reasoned with his usual clearness and foresight.

To his numerous vices Ezzelino joined many rare qualities, especially those which constitute a great military chieftain. He was ardent and brave, even to rashness, and very persevering in pursuing any project once formed, notwithstanding obstacles and disappointments. He could judge coolly of his chances of success, and foresee with remarkable perspicuity any circumstances which might favor his designs. An iron will, which shrank from no difficulty, enabled him to exercise an unbounded influence over his subordinates; thus his soldiers followed him into the greatest dangers, animated to bravery by his example. By means of these qualities, so necessary to a skillful general, as well as by his artful and deep hypocrisy, he even obtained the confidence of the citizens, who unanimously declared him chief of the people a few days after his elevation to the dignity of podestat. Ezzelino, once arrived at the object of his ambition, turned his fury against the nobles, his mortal enemies, whom he persecuted for thirty-four years; and although forced from motives of policy to show respect to certain powerful personages down to the year 1236, at which time his authority became absolute, he made use of pretexts, more or less specious, to rid himself of his adversaries. He set no further bounds to his cruelty,

when, in 1227, the Emperor Frederick came into Italy, and thus revived the ancient quarrel of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. Not content with shedding the blood of strangers, he daily murdered many of the nobles and citizens of his own dominions who by any slight act of imprudence had incurred his wrath. Soon even men of eminent talents fell under the displeasure of the tyrant, who always found some convenient excuse to justify, in his own sight at least, the cruelties he practiced upon them. Cries of malediction arose against him from all sides, but all resistance would have been useless, as the Emperor's protection upheld his cause against any opposers; religion alone could aid his wretched subjects.

Antony was about setting out for France, when he heard of the violence and oppressive tyranny practiced by the lord of Romano. Scarcely had it reached his ears than he resolved to go at once to Verona. His superiors willingly permitted him to carry out his resolution, as they knew that the saint never acted hastily, but always after deep reflection, and under Divine inspiration.

The nearer he approached to Verona, the greater the number of scenes of ruin and death multiplied under his eyes. The cruel satellites of Ezzelino, like an impetuous whirlwind, tearing up every object on its way, spared nothing in their savage fury - neither the innocence of youth, nor the decrepitude of age, neither sex nor rank; whoever made the slightest opposition fell under their bloody swords; even those who sought escape by means of prayers and tears met the same fate with those who endeavored to resist their sanguinary violence.

Verona itself presented the most mournful spectacle. A deep and mournful silence reigned throughout the entire city, lately so rich, so flourishing, and so full of life. All commerce

had ceased, and industry was at an end; those nobles and rich merchants who had not fallen victims to the cupidity of Ezzelino had taken refuge in the neighboring cities. The terrified citizens dared not show themselves openly in the city; they went about with their heads bowed down, fearing to expose themselves by some innocent action to the observation of the spies of the tyrant, who everywhere surrounded them. The bravos, or soldiers of Ezzelino, his worthy companions alone boldly walked the deserted streets, with haughty and fierce looks, as if deeming themselves invested with the sole authority in that city, which seemed under the pressure of the curse of Heaven.

But truly Christian courage shrinks from no peril when working for the glory of God and the salvation of His creatures. Antony was seized with sentiments of profound pity and lively indignation at the sight of so terrible a spectacle. He could not believe that a prince, who should be, here below, the representative of a just and merciful God, could abuse the power given him by the Almighty, in such a manner as to become the oppressor of his people, and the murderer of innocent men, created in the image of God and possessing claims upon His love and justice.

The holy man reflected seriously upon the object of his mission. He must at the same time reprimand the poor and indigent, and even frighten them by the remembrance of God's judgments, and make his severe and courageous voice heard by the rich, who were to learn from his mouth that, being merely simple mortals like the rest of mankind, they were one day to appear, side by side with the lowest of their dependents, before the tribunal of God, to render there an account both of the evil they had done and the good they had omitted to perform.

All absorbed in similar grave reflections, Antony made his way toward the palace of the prince, and demanded an immediate audience. This he obtained without any difficulty, as the tyrant, being in the habit of receiving his spies at all hours to listen to their secret information, could not imagine that a poor Friar Minor could have any other business with him. Armed guards introduced him into the audience-chamber. He found, facing the door of entrance, a short, thin man, seated upon a richly-ornamented throne and surrounded by the principal officers of his court; his dress was simple, but his harsh and forbidding countenance, as well as his haughty and disdainful bearing, inspired both terror and dismay. Like a tiger watching his prey with glaring eyes, he cast lightning glances around him. This was Ezzelino, tyrant of Verona. Antony was in no way intimidated; but boldly approaching him, saluted him with the following daring words:

"Cruel tyrant! bloody tiger! How long will you despise the long-suffering of the Lord? When will you cease your crying iniquity? Murderer of so many innocent ones! do you not hear the voice of blood unjustly shed, crying toward Heaven against you? Do you not hear the groans of widows and orphans, which touch the heart of a merciful, though just, God, and call down the most terrible maledictions upon your guilty head? Yet you do not tremble! and you still hope to enjoy some repose, while the Lord is preparing to call you to account for the death of so many innocent victims? Wretched man! See, the hand of God is raised against you; the sword of Divine justice is suspended above your head, and the anger of Heaven is ready to burst upon you! . . . and you do not tremble!"

But Ezzelino did tremble. Such daring words had never been heard within the palace of the Romano family. The wondering and stupefied guards waited only a sign from

their lord to put the bold speaker to death. But a sudden change had taken place within Ezzelino's bosom; filled with fear and uneasiness, he descended the steps of his throne, shaking in every limb, placed his belt around his neck, and, throwing himself at the feet of the saint, he said, in a trembling voice:

"Father! I am a miserable wretch who has a thousand times merited the chastisements of God! Pray for me, that the Almighty may preserve me from the effects of His just anger. I promise you sincerely to expiate my sins, and to repair all the evil I may have been guilty of."

Antony gently raised the humbled and repentant prince from the ground, inspired him with courage, and promised him to remain several days in Verona for his benefit.

The saint then took leave of Ezzelino. The companions in arms of that prince did not know how to explain the circumstance to themselves, but he said to them: "Do not be astonished at what has just happened. In my place you would have acted the same. For while the holy man was speaking to me, a heavenly light seemed to radiate from his face, which penetrated even to the marrow of my bones and froze me with fear."

This example proves the power of faith during the Middle Ages. For, without wishing to lessen the action of grace, we must, however, take into consideration the habitual disposition of the human mind, since sometimes the latter corresponds with grace, and sometimes offers obstacles to her free action. We cease to wonder that Henry IV and Frederick II, although very indifferent in religious matters, trembled at the mere idea of a sentence of excommunication, when we consider that in those times, a prince, separated from the Church, could no longer count

upon the fidelity of his subjects. He was therefore forced to respect the Church, if not from a motive of obedience, at least from that of personal interest. Excommunication does not produce a similar effect in modern times, because the world in general is no longer animated by the spirit of faith. But from whence comes this actual weakening of faith? Why was her action so much more lively among our ancestors, whose manners were no better than our own?

Writers of later times have pretended that man, engaged in the pursuits of speculative science, by the development of mind caused by the discovery of printing, lost all faith in the teaching of others, and trusted entirely to the exercise of his own reason. Others see the cause of it in that immorality and licentiousness which is the bane of modern times. But supposing these opinions true, how can we explain the irregularity of the people of the Middle Ages?

We do not hesitate to deny that the development of the human mind furnishes man with any principle of incredulity. We acknowledge on one hand - for it is a fact visible to our own eyes in the rapid propagation of the self-styled modern reformation - that the press is of powerful assistance in spreading evil among all nations; but on the other hand, we hold that true knowledge has never led anyone into atheism. Everyone knows the maxim of Chancellor Bacon on that subject. Nor will we admit that liberty of opinion produces licentiousness. We can easily prove the contrary, by observing what happens in modern society: these give free rein to their passions, suffer themselves to be carried away with the torrent of evil, and, when vice has become habitual, they seek in science for those sophisms which combat against faith, which condemns their errors, and which serve to stifle the remorse of conscience by which the sinner is tormented. Such was the doctrine taught by our Divine Savior to Nicodemus, when He explained to him the

incredulity of the Jews: "The light," said He, "is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."

The abuse of talent could not become general during the Middle Ages. Civilization was too little advanced to give persons a taste for scientific reasoning, and, besides, it was impossible to spread irreligious writings to any great extent, as the art of printing had not then been discovered. Therefore the people were forced to confine themselves to the knowledge of such truths of religion as their early education had impressed upon their minds. They would not relinquish the exterior practices of religion, although they were far from being really pious. At the same time their exterior devotion served as some sort of check to their unruly passions. They furthermore joined some superstitious ideas to their exact notions of religion. Thus we see astrology cultivated and practiced by men of learning and genius. For which latter reason the bishops and missionaries always endeavor to preach a solid doctrine, free from all superstition.

These circumstances combined, greatly aided the influence of preachers. It enabled them to establish the opposition which existed between the general public morals and true sentiments of piety; and to place before all eyes the terrifying or consoling images with which religion furnished them to convince and bring about the amendment of repentant sinners.

We often find men so given up to absurd superstition as to deny, as it were, by their misconduct, all the revealed truths of our holy religion. Ezzelino was one of this latter class. That tyrant, that declared enemy of the Church of Christ,

placed his whole confidence in astrologers, four of whom accompanied him everywhere; and he undertook nothing without their counsel and approval. Thus it is difficult to determine if the sudden change effected in him by the words of Antony was the effect of an extraordinary grace, or of an imagination excessively heated by fanaticism. We have reason to believe that both causes had an equal share therein, since grace often attacks a man by his weak side, and makes his very errors and wanderings serve as instruments for his conversion and return to truth. Still, Ezzelino was far from being an infidel: he believed in holiness, and knew perfectly in what it consisted; this we shall prove by what follows: He had long known Saint Antony, and had frequently heard of the miracles he performed, and had himself recently felt the marvelous influence of the eloquent words of the holy friar. But, like those perverse men who, without actually denying the possibility of holiness, are loath to believe in its existence in any one whom they know personally, he resolved to put Antony to a trial in order to prove his sanctity.

With this end in view, he sent some of his courtiers to visit the saint, bearing a magnificent present, which they were to offer to the latter on his part, begging him to accept it as a slight testimony of his sincere friendship for him. He added to this order, that of murdering the saint, should he accept the present, bidding them leave it with him should he refuse it. Truly Ezzelino had chosen a good way to prove the virtue of the saint, since disinterestedness should be one of the most striking qualities of a Catholic preacher.

Antony received the deputies with his usual gentleness and kindness, but had scarcely learned the motive of their visit than he drew back in indignation. "Go out of my sight!" he cried; "I want none of Ezzelino's presents; I only desire his amendment. Say to your master, that he should seek to

soften God's anger by offering to Him the homage of a truly contrite and penitent heart. For if he refuses to do so, the wrath of the Almighty will fall upon his guilty head."

It is needless to say that the deputies of the tyrant had not expected so magnanimous and violent an apostrophe. The holiness of Antony made so lively an impression upon them, that they threw themselves at his feet, covered with shame and confusion, openly avowed the true object of their visit, and begged him most earnestly to pray for them. Antony kept his temper admirably, addressed some words of encouragement to them, and finally dismissed them.

The words of grace which Antony had caused to resound in the ears of Ezzelino fell upon barren ground. The tyrant dissembled his despotic intentions as long as the saint remained in Verona; but soon after the latter's departure from the city he resumed his former habits, and set no bounds to his cruelty. As it is not our intention to write the history of this man, we will only add that he died the death of the reprobate. His tyranny, which lasted thirty-four years, went on increasing until his death. In 1259 he was wounded and taken prisoner at Bergamo. His wounds were dressed, and he received all requisite care; but he tore off the bandages, and died under the ban of the Church, despised alike by Ghibellines and Guelphs.

Chapter XV

End of the War Against the Albigenses - Literature of Languedoc - Apostolic Labors of Antony in that Province - Accomplishment of Two of the Saint's Prophecies - Foundation of Two Convents in France - Antony is Named Provincial Minister, and Sets Out for Italy - Foundation of the Convent of Glemona - Miracle Wrought on that Occasion - Miraculous Cure of a Child

We find it necessary to cast a passing glance over the events accomplished in Languedoc, during Antony's sojourn in Italy, since we are now about to follow him on his second journey into France. We have seen, in a preceding chapter, that the good Louis VIII, justly irritated against the perjured Raymond of Toulouse, resolved and promised to proclaim a fresh crusade against the Albigenses, in the beginning of the year 1226. In the spring of that same year, Louis repaired to Bourges to rejoin his army, encamped there, and marched along the banks of the Rhone towards Avignon. The greater part of the cities and villages on the way ranged themselves under his banner. Avignon, alone, closed her gates against him. The siege of the latter city lasted two months. France lost many men during the time, as much from sickness as from the frequent sorties of the besieged, who had also, in their turn, to struggle against the epidemic which raged within the walls of the town.

Towards the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin the city opened her gates to Louis. He ordered the fortifications to be demolished, and appointed a bishop to govern it; after which, penetrating still further into Languedoc, he advanced within four miles of Toulouse. There were no longer any cities or strongholds which had not fallen

into his hands. The capital of Raymond's possessions and a few fortresses alone offered an obstinate resistance. But the Almighty suddenly arrested his victorious course, of which he was not destined to reap the fruits: obliged to return at once to his dominions, he fell sick at Auvergne of a violent malady, which quickly carried him to the tomb: he died at Montpensier, on the 8th of November, aged forty years, leaving the throne to his son Louis, then only eleven years of age, who was, in after years, to add the crown of saint to that of king of France. Humbert of Beaujen, meanwhile, carried on the war against the Albigenses. It took him some time to subdue Toulouse, as the strength of its fortifications and its abundant provision of munitions of war prevented the French general from carrying it by assault.

In 1227, Queen Blanche, mother of Louis IX, and regent of the kingdom, dispatched a number of prelates and knights to the army. Among the former figured Elias Guerin, abbot of Grandelve, who was empowered to conclude a treaty of peace with the inhabitants of Toulouse. That unhappy city was suffering from famine; no provisions could be carried within the walls, and the harvest had been destroyed. Raymond, therefore, was forced to yield, and enter into negotiations with the assailants. The bishops resolved to hold an immediate council at Meaux, a city under the jurisdiction of the pious Thibault, count of Champagne, at which they were to settle the conditions under which they were to form a treaty of peace with Toulouse.

The pacification of that city was only accomplished in 1229, after Count Raymond had become reconciled with the Pope as well as with the king, and had put himself under the direction of the assembled bishops, who imposed very severe penances upon him. By one of them he was forced to consent that, after his death, all his states should revert to the crown of France, and that during the remainder of his life

he should merely have jurisdiction over the province of Toulouse, with the title of Usufructuary or Beneficiary Occupant. Thus ended a war which dated from the time of Innocent III, and had, so to speak, destroyed one of the most beautiful countries of Europe. We can easily imagine the miserable position to which Languedoc and Provence were reduced; all war is fatal to the country where it has raged; but perhaps no results are so disastrous as those occasioned by a religious warfare, since each soldier engaged therein fights for the defense of his cause and his personal belief, and he is less disposed to spare his enemy, as it is a question of the triumph of his faith. He is also carried away by an animosity which he does not experience in a war carried on merely to defend the temporal interests of his sovereign. This truth was but too well experienced throughout the south of France. An incessant warfare, marked by frequent battles and successive change of masters, brought about by the most opposite influences, had put a stop to agriculture, destroyed the harvest, ruined commerce and industry, and broken down the inhabitants, who, though become frivolous, were naturally of a lively and jovial character. These latter only awoke from their torpor to give themselves up to the greatest excesses, under the exciting influence of the troubadours. Their priests, continually surrounded by the greatest dangers, could with difficulty labor to promote the spiritual happiness of the miserable sheep confided to their pastoral care.

The greater part of Languedoc was already in the power of Louis IX when Saint Antony arrived in France, where he came, as we have previously stated, to act as superior of the convent of Puy, in Velay. He at once fully understood the importance of his mission, and saw that he had no time to lose in order to accomplish it, but that it was necessary to begin at once, with the aid of his brethren, to endeavor to repair the evils to which the long wars had given rise. His

heart bled at the sight of a crowd of miserable wretches driven from their homes by famine, wandering about in poverty and rags, or dragging their emaciated bodies through the streets of the city. There, as in Italy and other countries, usurers, for the most part Jews, carried on their shameful profession in the most inhuman and open manner, the more so as those blessed days had not yet dawned wherein Louis IX was to put an end to all injustice, and to re-establish the apparently forgotten rights of man.

Meanwhile, Antony undertook the defense of oppressed humanity. He boldly pursued the usurers, and, despising the dangers by which his life was menaced, he spread abroad distrust of those sordid deceivers. As far as lay in his power, he aided all the unfortunate by his counsels and assistance. He furnished clothes and food to the poor, at the same time that he provided for all their spiritual wants. He had not only to fight against usury, but also against the vices of hatred and impurity, which were everywhere dominant. He preached against this double vice with his usual eloquence, and confirmed his words by public and striking miracles, and succeeded at length in sensibly ameliorating the morals of the people.

At Puy, where Antony then resided, dwelt a notary who led a scandalous life. He was, however, neither impious nor an enemy of the Church, but was so wedded to the criminal pleasures of the world that his conversion seemed almost impossible. As he was frequently in the habit of meeting the holy guardian of the Friars Minor in the streets of the city, he remarked with the greatest astonishment that each time that he met him the latter threw himself on his knees, uncovered his head, and paid him every sign of the most profound respect. This proceeding of the saint greatly disquieted the voluptuous man. He shunned him in every

possible way, and it was sufficient for him to perceive him at a distance to fill him with alarm.

One day, when he accidentally met the saint, the latter threw himself again at his feet. The notary, who could not contain his anger at this strange conduct, retraced his steps, and said to him haughtily: "What harm have I ever done to you, that you should thus take every opportunity to ridicule me? If I had not feared God's anger, I would long since have stabbed you to the heart!" Antony remained quite unmoved, and gently answered: "Dear brother, in your person I venerate the martyr of Jesus Christ. I have vainly, for long years past, implored the Almighty to grant me the grace of laying down my life for his name. As for you, God has revealed to me that you will confess him publicly, and will seal that confession with your blood. Therefore I beg you to remember me when you shall have received the martyr's crown."

The notary, taking this language for that of a fool, went on his way, laughing aloud. Shortly after, the bishop of Puy went to Palestine to preach the faith to the Mohammedans. He set out accompanied by several priests and some lay brothers. Among the latter was the notary, who, touched by Divine grace, undertook that pious pilgrimage, having previously sold all his possessions.

The little company of missionaries landed in Syria after a long and difficult journey. Notwithstanding the eagerness of the bishop to visit with his companions the tomb of the Divine Savior, he could not quit the cities through which he passed without having some religious disputes with the Arabs; and used against them such weak arguments, and seemed so manifestly disposed to spare the false prophet Mohammed, in order not to clash with the Arabs, that he greatly discontented the notary, now become an apostle.

The latter, however, dissembled his displeasure for two days; but on the third day he interrupted the bishop in the midst of his discourse, boldly reprimanded him for his cowardly condescendence, and began at once to preach the faith to the infidels. He stigmatized the life of Mohammed; he pointed out the way in which that impostor had deceived his fellow-citizens, and concluded his sermon by saying, to the great scandal of the Arabs, that their prophet, being the son of the Devil, was expiating in Hell the loss of so many millions of souls.

The Mohammedans, who could hear everything but the blasphemy of their prophet, immediately seized the notary and tormented him grievously for three days. As they were leading him to execution on the third day, he said to his companions, who would not leave him in his last hour, that Antony, superior of the Friars Minor of Puy, had predicted his martyrdom to him. The pious crusaders did not fail, upon their return home, to divulge throughout France the accomplishment of his prediction.

Antony, meanwhile, continued to direct his brethren with loving prudence. After the example of Saint Francis, he acted toward them as a servant toward his master; although he was the first among them in dignity, he was so humble that he thought himself the least of all. He was a model of fidelity to the regulations of the community, and neglected no means of promoting that conventual perfection which was requisite as in a school of holiness, and never recommended the performance of any duty which he had not himself faithfully carried out.

The administration of his convent did not prevent him from carrying on his apostolic labors. Indefatigable in his search after sinners, he was ever ready to reconcile these wandering sheep to their Divine Shepherd through the

sacrament of penance. His love of his neighbor knew no bounds; he willingly endangered his life for the salvation of one soul, for the conversion of a single sinner.

Such zeal should not astonish us, since he burned with love for his crucified God; he also wished to conform his life to the doctrine of his Divine Savior, who had taught him that Charity could raise herself even to self-immolation.

Antony's grandeur of soul gave him great power over consciences. His penitents particularly noticed his great aptitude at quieting the most violent temptations. He was severe toward himself and full of goodness for those who confided to him the interests of their souls; he directed the latter with the rarest prudence, carefully considering their weakness, and applying himself especially to facilitate the Christian life by the moderate and judicious practice of works of piety and penance. Severity was never the motive of his conduct; he regulated the latter according to persons and circumstances. Wisely modifying his directions according to the nature of each one's spiritual needs, he knew how to gain the sinner, as yet scarcely won to repentance, by a prudent indulgence, sometimes even by a discreet condescension, thus succeeding in leading him insensibly to observe the duties of a courageous and virtuous Christian. The inhabitants of the South of France venerated him as a saint, had recourse to him in all their spiritual and temporal needs; and their pious confidence was rarely disappointed.

A lady belonging to one of the principal families of Puy, being on the point of becoming a mother, addressed herself to him in order to obtain by his prayers the assistance of God in her approaching danger. Antony, who never rejected any requests, knelt for a moment before the altar, after which he assured her that she should happily give birth to a

son, who would one day become a Friar Minor and suffer martyrdom for Jesus Christ. The prediction was fully accomplished in after years. The noble lady gave birth to a son, who became, in due course of time, a Friar Minor. While yet a novice he sighed anxiously for the moment when he could go to preach the faith among the infidels, and, if occasion offered, gain the palm of martyrdom. It was only after long expectation that he was allowed to set out for Jerusalem, where he remained some time striving to make fresh progress in the practice of Christian and religious perfection, by meditating on the passion of Jesus Christ upon the very spot it had taken place. Philip - that was the name of the Friar Minor - then repaired to Azoth, and remained among the Christians who inhabited that city, seeking to exhort them to perseverance in the critical position in which they found themselves.

The Mussulman soon laid siege to Azoth. Its inhabitants, firmly resolved never to yield under any consideration, valiantly defended their domestic firesides. The siege, however was short; treason opened the gate to the assailants, and all the Christians were cited to appear before the sultan. He gave them their choice between death or apostasy: there were few renegades among the Christians of Azoth, nearly all unanimously deciding to shed their blood for their Divine Savior.

Philip was brought before the sultan, in company with the other Christians; he showed great intrepidity, and addressed him in the following terms: -

"Know, O prince! that I am a priest, and that I preach the law of that Jesus whom you persecute. If the Christians here present before you are worthy of death, I myself also deserve to die a thousand times, since I have exhorted them by every means in my power never to obey your impious

orders. If I may ask any favor, it is that of being put to death after the others. And you," continued the confessor, turning toward his fellow-Christians, "be firm in the struggle which you have begun; raise your eyes toward Heaven; there the Divine Remunerator awaits you, to bestow upon you the crown of glory reserved for those who seal their confession of faith by the shedding of their blood. Be courageous; the combat will be short, and the recompense eternal! The Almighty has revealed to me that I shall this day enter Heaven accompanied by more than a thousand martyrs."

The Christians loudly applauded these noble and encouraging words, and cried out with one voice that they desired to die for Jesus Christ, and that they feared no torment, however terrible it might be.

The sultan, beside himself with anger, ordered his satellites to seize Philip, to cut off his fingers one by one, to flay him alive, and finally to tear out his tongue. His orders were executed, but Philip did not yield! He ceased not to thank God, and to exhort his brethren to perseverance, until his voice failed him; and when his tongue was torn out he prayed with his heart, keeping his eyes turned toward Heaven. After the sultan had satiated his ferocious thirst for human blood by the spectacle of such horrible torments, he ordered the Christians to be beheaded and their bodies thrown out as food for wild beasts. He was at once obeyed; and Philip, followed by all his companions, went to receive the martyr's crown so long before promised him by Saint Antony.

Toward the end of the year 1227, Antony founded a convent at Brioude, upon the solicitation of a nobleman named Quintus di Falcici, who furnished the means required for the buildings and first establishment. Some time afterward he built a second convent there, of which no vestige remains, it

having been, like the former, plundered and leveled with the ground, by the Huguenots, in the seventeenth century.

It was probably at the commencement of the following year, 1228, that Antony returned to Italy, on the occasion of his promotion to the dignity of minister of the province of Bologna. During his short sojourn in France he had been guardian at Puy, and according to Wadding, custode of the province of Limoges. Italy, however, needed his presence. The Patarins, aided by the war, had easily spread themselves throughout the land, and been enabled to establish bishoprics in the principal cities. Their power extended over Milan, Rimini, Padua, and Verona. In this latter city they were, if not favored, at least tolerated by Ezzelino, whose father, who lived in solitude, was said to be one of the adherents to and most zealous protectors of the Manichean doctrine.

After his return to Italy, Antony founded a convent at Glemona, in the territory of Forli. Chroniclers relate, with regard to this foundation, a fact which clearly proves to us the great credit our saint enjoyed before God, and the power with which he was endowed; this latter seems quite equal to that which was granted to the Apostle Saint Peter, whom we see, at the birth of Christianity, punishing with death the falsehood of Ananias and Sapphira.

While Antony was engaged in building the convent of Glemona, he needed some materials to carry on his work. He could not find means for their transportation, having neither horses nor wagons. As he was deliberating with his workmen to devise some method to procure them, a laborer passed with a wagon. Antony approached the conductor, and politely requested him, for the love of God, as the vehicle was empty, to permit him to load his wagon with a small quantity of wood and stones. The conductor, seeing no

advantage to be gained by compliance with his request, rudely answered that he could not place his wagon at their service, since it carried a corpse. He lied unblushingly, for the self-styled corpse was only his servant, who was sleeping from fatigue.

Antony did not insist, and the laborer resumed his route. When he had gone a little distance, he wished to awaken his domestic to tell him what had passed, and to enjoy a laugh at Antony's expense; but he could not rouse him. He then stopped his horses, and raised his voice to be the better heard, but received no answer. Covered with a cold sweat and greatly alarmed, he shook his servant violently but all to no purpose. He made many other efforts to arouse him, but was unsuccessful. No longer doubting of his death, he ran back with all speed to Antony, threw himself at his feet, related the sad case to him, owned his falsehood, and begged him to restore the dead man to life. The saint, moved by his tears and repentance, readily acceded to his request; he approached the wagon where lay the corpse of the servant.; remaining motionless for a moment, he raised his eyes and heart toward Heaven, then making the Sign of the Cross upon the victim of the laborer's falsehood, the servant seemed to awake as from a deep sleep, and stood up as if nothing had happened.

The saint obtained many other miracles from God by using the Sign of the Cross: we will mention one of the most astonishing. Antony, returning one day to his convent, after an apostolic excursion of some length through the different provinces, met a poor woman, holding in her arms a little boy, who was deformed and rickety from his birth. The unhappy mother had taken a cross-road, and walked through the fields, in order to bring her child to the place through which the saint was to pass. As soon as she perceived the man of God, she ran toward him, and throwing

herself at his feet, entreated him with most beseeching looks to give his blessing to the child, hoping that it might obtain for him the use of his limbs and restoration to health. Antony was greatly troubled at the thought of expecting a sinner like himself to work a miracle, and, refusing to yield to her supplication, tried to proceed on his way. But the mother, who saw all her hope vanishing, would not rise from the ground, but, embracing his feet, she turned toward him (her eyes bathed in tears), and cried out in agony, "Father! have mercy upon me." The saint, deeply moved by the sight of the afflicted mother, and sad fate of her infirm and suffering child, granted her request; invoking the Almighty, he blessed the unfortunate little sufferer, making over him the Sign of the Cross. The child raised himself erect in his mother's arms, completely straight and cured.

We will not attempt to describe the mother's feelings; suffice it to say that, overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, she threw herself anew at the saint's feet, who forbade her to divulge the miraculous cure of her child during his own lifetime. Upon resuming his journey, Antony informed his companion that the miracle he had just performed was owing to the mother's filial confidence in God, not to his personal merit; by which humble language he imitated our Divine Lord himself who would not suffer the people to publish abroad the wonders which he wrought, attributing them all to the power of His Heavenly Father, and to the faith of those in whose favor He performed them.

Chapter XVI

Revolt in Rome - Canonization of Saint Francis

Easter of the year 1228 was approaching. The emperor Frederick II was making preparations for his departure for Palestine; however, he was not willing to set out upon his journey until he had taken vengeance upon Gregory IX, who had excommunicated him. With this view he, early in March, called together the Frangipani, and other Roman nobles belonging to the Ghibelline party, in order to form some plot to disturb the Pope within the very walls of his capital. It was decided in their council that the emperor should purchase all the landed property or real estate of the Ghibellines, and give it back to them under the title of fiefs, thus acquiring a positive and permanent footing in the city of Rome. Their decision was quickly carried into effect, and the Frangipani bound themselves by a solemn promise to seize the first occasion to raise the standard of revolt.

The malcontents were faithful to their criminal engagements; they profited of the last days of Lent to excite the Romans against the Pope, counting upon the success of a revolutionary attempt amid the crowds of persons whom the solemnity of Easter had brought together in Rome. Great agitation pervaded the city from Easter Monday, on which day the Pope was accustomed to go to the basilica of Saint Peter to sing solemn High Mass. The tumult hourly increased, and, the murmurs of the crowd becoming more threatening, were soon followed by violence and revolt.

The church of the Holy Apostles seemed turned from a house of prayer into a public market-place. Each one pushed against the other. Nothing was heard but confused cries,

savage vociferations, and horrible blasphemies. They even uttered threats of pillage and death.

The Pope finished Mass without dismay, but with his eyes filled with tears and his soul with sadness. As soon as the religious ceremonies were concluded, he retraced his steps toward his palace, which he only reached with the greatest difficulty, being obliged to pass through a tumultuous and threatening crowd, which gave room to fear that his venerable old age and white hairs would not save him from insult. Gregory had learned from the history of some of his predecessors of what cruel excesses the Roman populace were capable: he recalled the bloody scenes during which Leo III and Gregory VII had undergone the most barbarous treatment, and he wisely resolved to fly from the dangers which menaced him, in order, by so doing, to spare his subjects the misfortune of rendering themselves guilty of new attempts against the head of the Catholic Church.

The Pope quitted Rome under fitting escort, about the beginning of April. He first went to Rieti, from whence he sent some Friars Minor to the Emperor, with a letter from himself, by which he endeavored, for the last time, to soften his hard heart. Under the sad circumstances, he thought seriously of providing the oppressed and suffering Church with a near patron and defender, by canonizing his deceased friend, the blessed Francis. He therefore set out in May for Spoleto, from whence he repaired to Assissium, having previously visited the convent of Saint Damian, and recommended himself to the prayers of Saint Clare.

The inhabitants of Assissium made great preparations to give the father of Christendom a brilliant reception, worthy of his august dignity. The Friars Minor flocked thither from all parts, to assist at the triumphal entry of the Holy Father. It is

probable that Antony, who was then in Italy, was present at Assissium on so solemn an occasion.

As soon as Gregory had entered the city amid the acclamations of the faithful inhabitants, he went at once to the church where the body of Francis reposed, and remained a long time kneeling, absorbed in prayer, before the sacred remains, In bitterness of soul he meditated upon the calamity which had already afflicted the Church, and upon those which might still be reserved for her, and earnestly implored the intercession and protection of his venerable friend. His prayer ended, he began, assisted by the cardinals then present, the examination of the miracles daily wrought through the intercession of Saint Francis. He gave the charge of the juridical study of the canonization to those very cardinals who were least disposed to hasten it, after which he repaired to Perouse, to re-establish peace between the inhabitants of that city and those of Spoleto, and to regulate different points of his misunderstanding with the Emperor.

Immediately after the process of canonization, which had taken place in due form, the Pope returned with his whole court to Assissium, where he found an immense multitude of all ranks and ages, who had assembled there to assist at the long-expected solemnity. The Pope wished to give all possible éclat to the canonization of his friend, in order to glorify in the eyes of the whole world, him who had trodden under foot all earthly honors and pleasures. No one ever remembered to have seen a canonization carried on with such magnificence; it was, besides, unheard of that the Pope should quit Rome, accompanied by his entire court, to proceed to canonize a saint in the very city where he had died. Perhaps, also, it was the first time that a similar solemnity had taken place in the presence of the mortal remains of the saint to be canonized.

Gregory delivered a discourse upon the virtues and grandeur of the holy confessor before reading the decree of canonization; the cardinal Rayniero Capoccio then read a list of the miracles verified and approved in the council of the princes of the Church; that ended, the Pope rose, and, lifting up his eyes and hands toward Heaven, pronounced in a loud and distinct voice the judgment, which declared that Francis was numbered among the saints of God, and fixed the fourth of October as the commemorative day of his canonization. The cardinals then intoned the *Te Deum laudamus*, which was finished by the official chanters, while the Pope knelt in prayer before the vaulted tomb which contained the body of Saint Francis.

It was then decided to build a magnificent church, into which they would transfer the bones of the saint. The Pope charged Brother Elias, general of the Friars Minor, to associate himself with the magistrates of the city in carrying on the construction of the sacred edifice.

The site destined for the new church was known under the name of the Infernal Hill, *Colle d'Inferno*, where all criminals were brought for execution. Saint Francis having frequently expressed a wish to be buried there, his desire was carried out, though in a different manner from the intention of the humble religious.

The Pope did not leave Assissium for Perouse until he had laid the first stone of the new church upon the Infernal Hill. The departure of Gregory was followed by that of the foreign Friars Minor, who soon returned to their respective convents. Let us return to Saint Antony, whom we have lost sight of for a time.

Chapter XVII

*Reflections upon the Interior Lives of the Saints - Antony
Considered in his Capacity of Superior - Padua in the
Thirteenth Century - Antony at Padua - The Blessed Helen
Enselmini - Antony Converts a Troop of Banditti*

If there be a loss we may deplore, it is incontestably that of the circumstantial notices upon the interior and claustral life of the saint whose history we are relating. The world admired his public actions; but he who could penetrate the noble motives of his conduct, would have discovered in that pure and humble soul spiritual treasures precious in the sight of God himself - treasures inappreciable, indeed, to the narrow reason of carnal man, but from which virtuous and enlightened hearts might draw celestial joys and salutary lessons.

We may say that the interior life of every saint is the same in principle, and that its essential qualities can be comprised in the following definition: the true interior life is the life of the soul with Christ in God. The soul who is little and humble in her own eyes draws God toward herself by that very humility, and receives from Him the virtue of charity, by which she raises herself toward Him as toward the inexhaustible source of all charity, in which she is happy to lose and to forget herself; to ennoble her natural inclinations, and to draw from thence all the motives of her actions and sentiments.

The labors of that soul for the happiness of her neighbor are the precious fruits of the intimate love which unites her to God; as the saints do not consider man's natural gifts, but see in him the image of God, the brother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took upon himself human nature in order to

restore and re-establish in the fallen King of creation the image of the Divinity and his primitive resemblance with Him; thus rendering to the rehabilitated sinner his dignity of child of God. From this boundless charity, joined to profound humility, arises, together with many other virtues, that lively and unshaken confidence in God which Jesus Christ recommends to us in His Gospel. As the saints saw God in all things, and referred all to Him, as they sought and found their neighbor and themselves in God alone, they had no greater interest and no other end but God's glory; and as, on the other side, they were fully convinced of their own nothingness, they hoped nothing from their own exertions, but every thing from Him whose cause they sustained, they seemed to share with the Almighty His empire over nature, and we see them perform wonders similar to those of God; such being, in effect, the inappreciable favors which the Divine Savior has promised to those who serve Him faithfully.

Such men are certainly blessings from Heaven! It is in mercy that God grants them to the world, and for the happiness of mankind that He overwhelms them with His Divine graces; for are they not truly sources of new grace to all those who experience their beneficent and salutary influence?

This is, in default of circumstantial details, all that we can positively affirm regarding Antony's interior life. We will follow the same method of reasoning as to his monastic virtues and his mode of directing his religious: as to the latter point, we find not the slightest particular in any history of his life.

As we have already seen, a grave division existed among the Friars Minor, even from the very foundation of their order: the spirit of zeal and discipline had to struggle earnestly with the spirit of the world and relaxation. Saint Antony, who

upon his first entrance into the order had taken Saint Francis of Assissium as his model of claustral perfection, joined the party of the more fervent religious, and espoused the cause of their holy founder. Thus Francis seemed, so to speak, revived in Antony; the young Friar Minor faithfully imitated the wise lessons of his illustrious master, and his profound veneration for his glorious memory and brilliant example made him a guide to his brethren in the road of virtue, and in some sort their living rule. In order to prove this, we have only to consult the writings, as well as listen to the lessons of Saint Francis of Assissluin; there we shall find rules of conduct for superiors, which will give us a faithful sketch of those qualities which distinguished Saint Antony's career as superior of a convent.

"I desire, my brethren," it is Saint Francis who speaks, "that the provincial superiors shall be always disposed to listen kindly to their subordinates; and that they evince such gentleness of demeanor that sinners need never fear to seek counsel of them. I wish them also to use their authority with moderation, and readily to pardon offenses; and that, enemies of sin, though physicians of sinners, they bear with the guilty rather than offend any one whomsoever. In a word: I wish them to conduct themselves in such a manner that they may each serve as a mirror of religious discipline to their brethren."

"A superior," he says again, "should love mental prayer, in such a way, however, as to consecrate one portion of his time to perfecting himself in virtue, and the other to the service of those under his direction.

"Let him make no distinction of persons; but show equal solicitude for the simple and ignorant as for the wise and learned.

"Though he be well versed in all the sciences, he should be nevertheless pious, simple, patient and humble.

"He should never forget that he should labor to perfect himself as well as all those under his charge, in all Christian virtues, as well by the constant practice of all good works as by his exhortations, in order that all his brethren may be powerfully excited to virtue by his salutary example.

"Where there is question of softening a hardened heart, he should understand how to humble himself and sacrifice a little of his dignity, in order by that means to gain souls to Jesus Christ.

"He should know, above all things, how to sound the secrets of all consciences, and seek truth in their varied folds."

Saint Antony followed this last advice exactly: as it were, reading the very souls of his brethren, and frequently discovering the temptations which were leading them astray, he knew how to put them immediately to flight, sometimes by a single word. Several converted sinners have declared that our saint appeared to them in dreams, to exhort them to confess certain sins which he named to them, and of which they acknowledged themselves guilty.

These facts, and many others of the same nature; perfectly explain the influence which a man of persuasive eloquence like Saint Antony succeeded in gaining over the hearts of all around him; an influence which daily increased by means of the wonderful prodigies he unceasingly wrought. Truly, if sanctity alone commands the respect of every one, how great must be the empire of him who sustains his reputation by miracles!

We judged these preceding considerations necessary to prepare our readers to understand the many wonders which

we shall relate, for the nearer our hero approaches the end of his glorious career, the more numerous and striking become the miracles with which Heaven honors him.

In the thirteenth century, Padua was one of the most considerable cities of Italy, even among those which vied with one another in power and riches; she had also heroically resisted the incessant attempts made by the German emperors, who endeavored to bring her, like the other free cities, under an iron yoke, for she was firmly resolved not to submit to their jurisdiction. Like Bologna, she possessed a university, to which the youths from all parts flocked to study law and many other sciences. At this time these universities were true seats of power; they exercised an incredible influence over their students, who, returning to their families, spread widely round the principles there inculcated. Thus it frequently happened that princes were forced to consult the celebrated professors, and, by reason of their own ignorance, yield to their decision. The most learned members of the various universities, especially those of Bologna, had shown themselves very sensible of the favors which had been liberally granted to them by the German emperors, and sustained their policy in their instructions; the crafty Frederick II, working upon their ambition or their cupidity, favored them with his powerful protection, gave them many privileges and every possible proof of interest and good-will, in order to attach the Italian universities to his party. By these means he succeeded in giving to them a great renown, and the more flourishing they became the more they contributed toward the growth, both in population and wealth, of those cities where they were situated.

Padua attained to a remarkable degree of splendor; but her growing prosperity spread insubordination and luxury throughout all ranks of her inhabitants: so numerous an

assemblage of young men of all countries necessarily presented grave difficulties, and when we remark that heresy sought her adepts especially among the ranks of the students, we are no longer astonished at the excessive immorality which reigned in that city, become in some sort the seat of human sciences.

In the height of her prosperity, two Friars Minor passed through Padua; their coarse garments and modest bearing excited the respect and compassion of the passers-by. They stopped in a square, where the crowd was the greatest, and one of them began to preach aloud. His simple and artless words penetrated, like burning arrows, the hearts of his hearers; he depicted in lively colors the great enormity of sin and the horrible torments of Hell; he sounded the inmost depths of the sinner's soul, and touched his heart by his eloquent and persuasive language. The preacher spoke with such zeal, and his holiness shone so forcibly in his features, that the inhabitants of Padua retired, deeply moved and astonished. The effect of this sermon does not surprise us, the preacher being Saint Antony, whose life and miracles were to add so greatly to the glory of that city, which he then entered for the first time. It quickly spread 'round the city that the Friar Minor, who worked so many miracles, and whose name was in every mouth, had preached there once, and was to preach again. The following days the people flocked in crowds to the church where the bishop had permitted our saint to announce the Divine Word. Language cannot describe the marvelous change which Antony's sermons produced in the city of Padua. Many sinners, deeply touched by his persuasive eloquence, quitted their scandalous lives, and became edifying Christians, after having passed the greater part of their lives in impurity; and many virgins, moved by his praises of chastity - a virtue which he constantly upheld - consecrated their lives to Jesus Christ, and retired into convents.

Among his auditors was a child of twelve years of age, in whom, even at that tender age, the grace of God was doing marvelous things. We will speak of this in a more detailed manner, because Saint Antony contributed greatly toward her progress in Christian perfection.

The Enselmini had always been numbered among the most pious as well as most powerful families of Padua. The head of that house had courageously defended the liberties of the nobles and commons against the usurpations of the ambitious emperor Frederick II, and also gave an example, both to his equals and inferiors, of true and solid virtue. Helen, his eldest daughter, gave proof of an eminent sanctity from her tenderest years; the Holy Ghost had ornamented her youthful heart with so many precious gifts that nothing childish was noticeable even in her least actions; on the contrary, everything about her evinced a degree of perfection worthy of persons of far more advanced age. She carefully avoided all the amusements of her companions, in order the better to guard against distractions and have more time for prayer. She greatly respected her father, and punctually accomplished all his wishes; but she would never consent to attend balls or dances, nor be found in any company where persons of both sexes were assembled.

She was twelve years old when she first heard Saint Antony preach. Endowed with great talent, but yet inexperienced, she shuddered when the preacher described the malice of sin and the danger of the world; and learning from his lips how precious virginity is in God's sight, and how sweet it is to live for God alone, she immediately decided to choose no other spouse but Jesus Christ, and to take Saint Antony as her guide in the road toward Christian perfection.

Antony willingly undertook the care of her conscience. Filled with love as he was toward sinners, how could he refuse his consent and aid to holy souls who were desirous of securing their salvation? He fully realized that these latter formed the most interesting and glorious portion of the flock of Jesus Christ, and that it is one of the most meritorious wishes of a confessor to conduct them along the road of sanctity both by words and example.

Guided by the advice of Saint Antony, and with the consent of her father, Helen entered the convent of Poor Clares, which had been founded at Padua, in 1220, by Saint Francis himself. Her desire for virtue having no bounds, Saint Antony, her skillful director, was frequently called upon to moderate her zeal. She macerated her feeble and delicate body, and, instead of granting it any privileges, she overwhelmed it with all manner of penances, until God, who wished to make her an image of the crucified Savior, afflicted her with a painful and unknown malady. She was soon forced to take to her bed, where she suffered the most cruel torments during the space of sixteen years, with the most exemplary patience and with truly celestial joy.

She expired on the 4th of November, 1242, on which day the three orders of Saint Francis recite the mass and office of the blessed in her honor.

We frequently see holy souls form a union and friendship, in which natural inclinations have no share, and which have no other foundation or principle but the love of God and their mutual benefit. When two souls equally filled with Divine love meet, as it were, upon the same base, they mutually experience the grace of the Holy Ghost, share their sanctity, and become more perfect in virtue by their mutual progress. Such were the bonds which united Saint Francis of Sales to the holy Baroness de Chantal; such, also, was the tie of

friendship formed between Saint Antony and his spiritual sister, the blessed Helen.

While our saint's apostolic zeal reformed the inhabitants of Padua, a young man presented himself to him and humbly demanded the habit of the Friars Minor. Lucas Belludino - such was the name of the pious aspirant - belonging to one of the noblest families of Padua, had received a brilliant education. Far from imitating the usual conduct of his fellow-students in the university, he separated himself from them, and employed his leisure hours in useful and holy occupations. Antony, who had discovered him to possess a pure and humble soul joined to a well-cultivated and talented mind, gladly admitted him into his order, and made him thenceforward his companion in the numerous missions which he gave from that time until 1231 at Padua, Rimini, and elsewhere. Lucas made wonderful progress in religious perfection under the skillful direction of Saint Antony, whose apostolic labors he continued even after the death of the latter.

Antony's ardent zeal sought to extend itself beyond the walls of Padua; therefore, after his task within the city was finished, he went through the hamlets and villages around, exhorting all to penance. At that time it was very dangerous to travel through the country. Companies of disbanded soldiers or deserters, adventurers who were at the service of the highest bidder, and other vagabonds, united together in troops and annoyed the inhabitants of the plains and mountains by numerous acts of brigandage. During the day they would traverse the villages, hamlets, and even cities, closely disguised, examining the various situations and learning the means of defense possessed by the wealthy inhabitants, in order the better to overcome all difficulties to be encountered in the execution of their sinister designs.

Antony happened one day, accidentally, to preach in a village where there were twelve, some say twenty-two, of these brigands. These latter did not believe the accounts that they had often heard relative to the eloquence and holiness of the celebrated preacher: desirous to know the truth by their own experience, they mingled among the saint's hearers. Antony preached eloquently as usual, and succeeded in deeply moving the hearts of the brigands. After the sermon they all went in a body, threw themselves at his feet, confessed their sins, and begged for a rigorous penance Antony affectionately received these repentant sinners, beard their confessions, gave to each one a touching exhortation appropriate to his spiritual wants; finally, imposing a penance upon each, he dismissed them in peace.

Several years after this wonderful conversion, some Friars Minor met near Rome a pilgrim, who was returning from visiting the tombs of the apostles. The latter, a man well advanced in years, joined the two religious, to whom he made known that he was one of the brigands converted by Saint Antony. "We heard him," said the old man, "address us in words of fire; we saw his tongue shine like a torch, and our hardened consciences melted like wax before the fire. That holy preacher seemed to place his hand upon our hearts and pierce them with arrows at every word. We all made a general confession to him, with such lively emotion that we could scarcely speak. I cannot describe to you the goodness and tenderness with which he received us, the unction with which he exhorted us to reform, the profound conviction with which he promised us God's mercy and eternal glory if we persevered in our good resolutions, nor the energy with which he menaced with both temporal and eternal punishment those who should return to their former iniquities. Some among our number had the misfortune to relapse into sin, and I saw them die on the gallows: the

remainder all expired in peace with God. The saint gave me as a penance to make twelve journeys to Rome to visit the tombs of the glorious apostles. I have accomplished that duty for the last time, my heart is filled with joy, and I await the fulfillment of the promise of the holy man, whose doctrine I have endeavored to practice."

Thus Saint Antony sought the happiness of all sorts of persons; his ardent love of his neighbor extended itself to persons of all ranks; sex, and age; he loved all men because they were all created in the image of God and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and because all might become the children of God and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven.

About this time our saint, hearing that the sect of Patarins were very numerous at Rimini, where they gave great trouble to the Catholics, resolved to leave Padua for a time and endeavor to fight against and overcome that heresy, if possible.

Chapter XVIII

Antony at Rimini - His Sermon to the Fish - Attempt Against his Life

Among all the Italian cities, Rimini and Milan contained the greatest number of heretics, particularly during the thirteenth century. These new Manicheans were spread, it is true, over the entire kingdom, but their chiefs had fixed their abode in the two above-named cities, where, in imitation of bishops, they administered the sacraments to the members of their sect; they had also established schools there, where they formed and instructed missionaries, who zealously propagated their errors.

At Rimini, the Manichean Church was governed by a man named Bentivoglio. He was possessed of rare eloquence, and had greatly deceived his fellow-citizens by his skillful sophisms. There were, it appears, only a small number of Catholics left in Rimini. It was, therefore, quite time to attend to the spiritual wants of that city.

Upon arriving at Rimini, Antony quickly understood that his preaching would be fruitless, could he not succeed, at once and above all, in converting and attaching to himself the chief of the heretics, the self-willed Bentivoglio. His conversion would disarm error, and the disciples would fearlessly and willingly follow the example of their master. But how bring this about? Bentivoglio was already old, and had been firm in his heterodox belief for more than thirty years. He had also obtained a great reputation, as well by reason of his riches as from his eloquence. Antony well knew how much more difficult it was to change the opinion of one confirmed in error than one who knows and seeks truth, and that this difficulty is greatly increased where the passions

are favored by the existing error, as was the case with the heresy of the Patarins. Therefore he counted little on the success of his own efforts, but placed all his hopes in Divine assistance, and confidently undertook the work of his conversion. Contrary to all expectation, the heresiarch quietly submitted to the authority of the saint, and returned into the bosom of the Church, notwithstanding the persecution to which he was exposed from his old adherents. This astonishing event, however, did not further Antony's success. The other heretics, irritated by the defection of their bishop, and doubtless fearing the saint's wonderful empire over all hearts, obstinately refused to attend his sermons, and exerted all their influence to keep away the rest of the inhabitants.

Antony, having scarcely any hearers, could not obtain any great advantage over heresy. But the Almighty came to his aid, and worked in his favor a prodigy which would seem incredible, were it not attested by a number of witnesses well worthy of credit. We will relate it in the simple and touching language of the old chronicler: -

"Saint Antony went one day without the city gates, toward the spot where the Matecchia flows into the Adriatic, and stopped between the river and the sea. Then, raising his voice, as if preaching, he commanded the fish, in God's name, to come up to the surface of the water. These were his words: 'Fish of the sea and rivers! hear the word of God, since the perfidious heretics refuse to listen to it!' He was immediately obeyed. All the fish, both great and small, approached the shore and raised their heads out of the water; they were far more numerous than had ever been seen in that spot.

"If you had been present at this marvelous spectacle, you would have seen the larger fish protecting the smaller ones,

and these latter sheltering themselves under the fins of the former. The different species of fish, classing themselves separately, offered themselves to the eye of our saint as a vast field, enameled with the most brilliant colors, and ornamented with the most beautiful figures. The bodies of the larger fish arranged themselves as if in order of battle, the better to hear the saint's words; the smaller fish drew their ranks close together, and all remained quiet and motionless, seeming to act by God's inspiration. All these various fish, like pilgrims seeking to gain indulgences, approached our saint in compact groups, looking upon him evidently as their father and protector. In this way they listened to his sermon, the smaller ones near the shore, the larger behind them, and the largest size in the deepest part of the river. When they were all arranged thus in order, Saint Antony preached to them as follows: -

"My brethren the fish, you have reason to bless God with all your powers, since He has given you so noble an element as your place of abode, where you can choose between fresh and salt water, according to your need. He has given you in this element a peaceful asylum to shelter you from storms and tempests. He has created this element transparent, in order that you can the better make your way about and find your food. He has also abundantly provided for your daily subsistence. At the time of the creation, God ordered you to increase and multiply, in sign of His benediction. At the universal deluge you experienced no evil, while all other animals who remained out of the Ark perished in the waves. Aided by your fins and by your strength alone, you can swim over the whole sea. You had the privilege of preserving Jonah, the prophet of God, and of depositing him safe and sound on the shore. It was you who offered our Lord a penny to pay the tax which His poverty prevented Him from acquitting. Finally, you it was who served for nourishment to the Eternal King, before and after His resurrection. Therefore

it is your duty to praise and bless God, from whom you have received such numberless favors granted to no other animals.'

"Some fish answered these words by a confused noise, others opened their mouths, some bowed their heads; all manifesting, according to their means, profound respect for their Creator. Seeing this, Antony, in a holy transport of joy, cried out with a loud voice: 'Blessed be the Eternal God! for the fish of the sea and rivers venerate their Creator more than those heretics, and irrational animals are more docile than men who reverence the true faith!'

"During the whole course of Antony's sermon, the number of fish kept gradually increasing. The inhabitants of Rimini, Manicheans and Catholics, who came in crowds to witness this strange sight, were filled with wonder at so great a prodigy, and, interiorly touched by Divine grace, cast themselves on their knees before the saint, and begged him to preach the Divine word to them also. He preached with so much zeal and eloquence, explaining so clearly the fundamental points of the Catholic faith, that he had the happiness to convert all the heretics there present, and to re-establish the Catholics in their holy belief. His numerous auditory would not disperse without receiving his blessing. The fish seemed to applaud his words, and asked, in their way, permission to retire, and, on a simple sign from him, they plunged into the water, and were seen no more."

We will not add our own reflections to this charming sketch. Any miracle, however extraordinary, which had so happy an effect upon an entire city, will easily disarm all criticism.

Still, heresy was not completely subdued. As is always the case, some persons resolutely closed their eyes to the light of truth, and resisted the Holy Ghost. They treated Antony's

miracles in the same manner as the Jews did those of our Divine Savior, and even resolved to expose their formidable adversary to a severe trial. Meeting together at the house of one of their number, they deliberated as to what snare they should lay against the saint, or whether it would not be more to their advantage to take his life by some hidden means. With this intent they formed a plan, which was, as we shall soon see, well worthy of its originators.

That very day, a heretic invited Antony to dine with him, and, in order to induce him to accept the invitation, told him that there would be many important things spoken of at table, and that among the guests assembled there would be many who were desirous of profiting by his wise counsels.

Antony accepted the invitation, notwithstanding his well-known aversion for feasting, either because he thought the salvation of some souls to be concerned, or, perhaps, because God had enlightened him as to the designs of the heretics. Whatever may have been his true motive, the intrepid Friar Minor presented himself at the hour named, and they sat down to table. Scarcely had they served the dishes, when Antony understood by a miraculous sign which ones would be fatal to him, these latter having been poisoned by the heretics, who had taken that means to rid themselves of him without compromising any one of their number; and, the better to cover their treacherous design, they overwhelmed him with every mark of politeness and respect.

Antony, keeping his temper in the midst of the danger to which he was exposed, cast upon the wretches a look full of sweetness and firmness, and exclaimed: "Unhappy men, what evil have I ever done to you, that you should seek to take away my life? Do you not fear the wrath of Heaven, in thus violating the sacred rights of hospitality?"

The heretics, although surprised to find their project discovered, did not despair of its accomplishment, and one among them, probably the host, pretending dismay, replied:

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"No, father, we did not seek to take away your life. God preserve us from such a crime! We esteem you by far too highly to wish to do you the least harm. We have learned wonders of your sanctity, and being no longer able to doubt it, since we have seen you work miracles, we wished to offer to the people a new and striking proof of your virtue, and convince them that you are a true servant of God. Jesus Christ has promised his faithful servants that they should drink poison with impunity, and these words of holy Scripture should be taken literally."

"By no means," replied Antony; "for our faith is not always to be proven by external signs and miracles. Although God, where the interests of truth are concerned, or when it pleases Him to do so, makes use of proofs which affect our exterior senses, it does not follow that we are allowed to require the like to convince us of the divinity of His teachings. The truth of our faith, besides, does not depend upon these prodigies. In the early days of the Church, it is true, miracles were needed to confirm the doctrine of Jesus Christ; but it does not result therefrom that we have the same necessity for them. As a tree which has taken deep root, and has grown strong and healthy, is neither so regularly nor so carefully tended as at the time when, recently planted, it was only a feeble sapling, in like manner, the Church, which is now solidly established, has no longer the same need of miracles as formerly, in order to prove her Divine origin."

"What you say may be true," answered the heretic; "but it is no less equally so that if you are really holy, you can eat of

these poisoned dishes without feeling the least indisposition. We wish to test your virtue, and we all here present promise that we will embrace the Catholic faith if the poison has no effect upon you."

Antony, feeling God would assist him, unhesitatingly accepted the proposed test; and, having blessed the poisoned dishes, ate sufficiently of them to have caused his death under ordinary circumstances. The heretics, who anxiously and impatiently awaited the result, seeing that Antony, suffering no inconvenience from the poison he had swallowed, continued to explain to them the faith of Christ, were deeply moved, and, having respectfully hearkened to the saint's words, finally declared themselves ready to abjure their errors, and all returned into the bosom of the Church.

When Antony had regulated the affairs of the Church, he quitted Rimini, to return into his province and resume his charge over his brethren.

It seems probable that the miracle we have just related took place about the year 1229; the annals of the Friars Minor do not mention any particulars of Antony's life between the years 1226 and 1230; Wadding and the Bollandists relate several facts without assigning any exact time to each; it appears to us therefore only proper to number them among the four years which the other chroniclers seem to pass over in silence - the more so, as we are convinced that Antony preached the Lent of 1229 at Padua, for it seems almost impossible that he could have worked so many miracles and performed so many labors in that city during so short a space of time.

Chapter XIX

Antony twice Saves his Father, Martin Bulhon, from Imminent Danger - Two Miracles Wrought by Antony - Origin of the Flagellants

While dwelling upon the wonders of Saint Antony's life, we have entirely lost sight of his parents; and as all men, without exception, had a share in the charity of this great Thaumaturgus, it is but reasonable to suppose that his parents must have received great benefits therefrom, and that filial love added new luster to his name.

Sancho I, king of Portugal, dying in 1211, had for his successor his son Alfonso II, surnamed the Fat. Martin Bulhon, who, as we have already stated, was on terms of intimacy with King Sancho, had obtained from him high offices under government; these he preserved under the new king, Alfonso, who, dying at Coimbra, in 1223, was succeeded by Sancho II. Immediately after his coronation, the latter prince hastened to carry on the wars against the Saracens, which had been undertaken by his father shortly before his death.

While Alfonso II lay ill at Coimbra, he had confided the management of several important affairs to Martin Bulhon; and placed at his disposal a large share of the public money, as he intended, should he recover, to carry on the war against the Moors. Sancho II retained Bulhon in his service, and, taking the field in person against the Moors, captured the city of Algarve.

The chevalier Bulhon was a celebrated statesman, and of undoubted probity, his only fault being a want of prudence. Not being able to conduct all his important affairs

unassisted, he employed clerks, to whom he committed the care of the public money. He could not well have done otherwise; but he neglected one indispensable precaution: he omitted to take their receipts for the sums confided to them.

Upon the return of the king, Bulhon was called upon to give in his accounts, and to return to the treasury the money remaining in his hands. What was his consternation, after a scrupulous examination of the state of his finances, to find himself deceived by his subalterns, who denied ever having received any of the sums for which they were to account! Bulhon had no written proof to bring against them, and as the amount of his fortune did not allow him to make good the deficiency, he saw no means of saving his credit. The court were already deliberating as to the propriety of seizing all the possessions of the Bulhon family and selling them for the public benefit. But Divine Providence watched over the fate of a man who had been so cruelly deceived.

Upon the appointed day, Bulhon appeared before the council, to clear himself from the charges against him. Convinced of the impossibility of proving the treachery of his clerks, he had determined to state merely the simple truth, and submit to his sentence with calmness and Christian resignation. But at the very moment when he, overwhelmed with the weight of the fake testimony brought forward, seemed unable to justify himself, his son Antony, who was then in Italy, suddenly made his appearance in the council-chamber, and turning toward his father's accusers, cried out, "Did you not receive, on such a day, at such an hour, such a sum of money from my father? Fear to deny the truth; for God, who is the author of justice, will punish your perfidy and falsehood in the most unexpected and terrible manner."

The false accusers, greatly confused by the unexpected interruption, and intimidated by the piercing look of the saint, threw themselves on their knees before him, confessed their guilt, and convinced the judges of Bulhon's innocence.

History does not mention the punishment inflicted on the false accusers; she only tells us that the noble Bulhon was reinstated in his office, and recovered all the possessions which had been seized upon by the king. It appears likely that Antony's father had many powerful enemies, who made use of the smallest pretenses to endeavor to cause his ruin.

King Sancho II was no great friend to the clergy: he was a courageous warrior, and capable of enduring all the fatigues of military life, but possessing none of those qualities which render a man, especially a prince, dear to those around him. He looked with an evil eye upon the growing power and influence of the priesthood. Following the example of his father, who had banished the archbishop of Braga, he frequently encroached on the rights of the Church, and carried his injustice to so great an extent, that he was excommunicated by Pope Innocent IV. The chevalier Bulhon could not share the friendship of Sancho, for, being a man of honor and virtue, he was constantly called upon to oppose the projects of the king, with whom his office of civil functionary brought him into continual connection. He had, furthermore, as his colleagues in his administrative career, courtiers who, like almost all who frequent courts, depended not upon the heart, but upon the slightest whim of the prince, and who were subservient to all his desires and passions; these latter were consequently unfavorable to the honest chevalier, whose noble and edifying conduct formed so striking a contrast to their ever-servile adulation. Bulhon was therefore obliged to be constantly on his guard, to avoid

anything which might furnish his enemies with a pretext to raise doubts against the loyalty of his intentions.

But, however, he found himself, for the second time, in a most critical situation - in actual danger of dying on the scaffold; indeed, he would never have escaped had Saint Antony not come once more to his assistance.

Not far from the residence of Bulhon, in the city of Lisbon, there dwelt two knights, belonging to the first families of Portugal, who had sworn eternal enmity. Several times they had sought to murder each other, but their attempts had mutually failed. One evening, one of these knights, returning alone to his home, was set upon by his enemy and his adherents, in the very street where Martin Bulhon resided. Though the poor wretch was armed, he was unprepared for an ambuscade, the more so as he was only a few steps from his own door. But at the moment he was stepping over the threshold of his house, the brigands threw themselves upon him, knocked him down, and killed him with their daggers, without even giving him time to cry for help. In order to conceal their crime, they carried the corpse of their victim toward Bulhon's orchard, and threw it over the outer wall: thus they succeeded in sheltering themselves from the accusation of murder, although their well-known hatred of the deceased might cause them to be suspected.

The next morning Lisbon was in a state of the wildest excitement. The relatives of the murdered man made the strictest search after his body. They finally found it in Bulhon's orchard, to which they had tracked the bloody footsteps.

They immediately imprisoned the honorable chevalier, with his whole family; and as he could furnish no satisfactory

proof of his innocence, he was shortly after condemned to death, in spite of his well-known irreproachable conduct, and of the eminent services he had rendered to the Portuguese crown.

Antony was preaching at Padua at the very moment that the tribunal of Lisbon pronounced the sentence of death against Bulhon. God revealed to him at the same time the danger of his father. Antony covered his face with his hood, and, leaning upon the side of the pulpit, appeared at Lisbon in the council-chamber. The saint arrived at the right moment, for they were just about leading his father to execution. Antony ordered the procession to stop, and turning toward the astonished judges, said to them: "Know, O judges, that my father is innocent. He has, it is true, not been able to furnish any proof of it; but follow me, and I will convince you of it myself."

The judges, who witnessed the second appearance of Antony in their midst, were dazzled by the sanctity which shone forth from his countenance. All followed him in a body to the cathedral where the murdered man lay buried.

The tomb was opened by his order, and Antony addressed the dead person in the following words: "I order you, in the name of Almighty God, to rise up and bear witness to the truth."

Obedient to his command, the dead man rose up and declared, in presence of the assembled crowd, that Martin Bulhon, far from being his murderer, had had no knowledge of the assassination before his own arrest.

At this declaration, the judges begged Antony to order the deceased to make known the guilty parties, but the saint replied: -

"I came hither to save the life of the innocent, not to point out the guilty."

The knight whom Antony had recalled to life then threw himself at his feet, and entreated him to obtain for him the pardon of his sins, and to raise the sentence of excommunication which had been pronounced against him. When the saint had granted his prayer, he laid himself down in his tomb and slept in peace with God, encouraged by the hope of one day enjoying celestial bliss.

At that moment, Antony, who had not quitted the pulpit of the church in Padua, suddenly came to himself, and, docile to God's inspiration, excused himself to his hearers for having so unexpectedly interrupted his sermon, and related to them the prodigy which had just taken place. Some of the Paduans, doubting his word, wrote to Lisbon to find out the truth. They learned, with equal joy and surprise, that the account was exactly true.

The parents of our saint must certainly have considered themselves happy to have preferred yielding their son up to God than to have followed the promptings of ambition. Had not God amply rewarded them for the sacrifice they had made to Him? They were delivered from certain ruin by the miraculous intervention of their son, whose wonderful sanctity must have been, to such pious parents, a source of the purest joy and sweetest consolation which they could enjoy here below. God could have, it is true, saved the Bulhon family by a thousand other means; for example, he could have softened the heart of one of the assassins, and led him to confess his crime, with all its attendant circumstances; but the Almighty, to whom it is as easy to create the whole world as a single atom, and whose power is as supreme as it is unlimited, wished to honor His servant by

prodigies which exceed all human intelligence, and thus give man a striking proof of his tenderness for him.

We might perhaps say, with an author of the seventeenth century, "that we see in this miracle the mystery of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, of which Antony was the zealous defender and propagator; and that God, to render him a participator in the privileges of the Man-God in the Holy Sacrament, wished perhaps to show in his person the possibility of His real presence in all parts of the world, where the divine and unbloody sacrifice of the Holy Mass is offered up."

Be this as it may, it is nevertheless certain that Antony acquired great renown at Padua by means of his virtue and the miracles which he wrought; his authority was so firmly established, that his slightest wish was law; his earnest words converted the most hardened sinners; sometimes even they took his words too literally, as the following example will prove

A young man had declared to him, in confession, that he had kicked his mother. The thought of so great a sin filled Antony with horror, and he said to the unnatural son: - "Miserable wretch, you should cut off the foot which could serve as an instrument of such brutality toward a father or mother!"

The young man was terrified by these words; but, never doubting that God spoke by the mouth of his confessor, he did not stop to reason with himself, but hastening home, seized an ax, and cut off one of his feet. This action was quickly noised abroad; and as the mother of the penitent, inconsolable at his misfortune, related it to all her neighbors, it soon reached Antony's ears, who, greatly surprised at the extraordinary though imprudent zeal of the sufferer, blamed himself as the innocent cause of all, and hastened to his

residence in order to give him all the assistance in his power. Filled with lively compassion for his penitent, whom he found in great agony, he raised his hands and eyes toward Heaven, and begged the Almighty to send him some relief. Then, taking the amputated foot, he applied it to the bleeding leg, and, making the Sign of the Cross over them, had the consolation of seeing the young man stand up and throw himself at his feet, shedding tears of joy and gratitude.

Another time, a man who had been converted by one of Antony's sermons came at once to the saint, and entreated him to hear his confession. Though greatly fatigued, Antony immediately entered his confessional to console the heart of the sinner; for he never refused to listen to a penitent. But the poor man was so overcome with sorrow as to be quite unable to make his confession: his sobs and groans completely depriving him of the power of speech. As the saint was unable to moderate his grief, and was greatly pressed for time, he desired him to return home, and not to come back to him without writing down his sins. The man obeyed; but when he handed his written confession to Saint Antony, the latter saw with joy that he held in his hand a piece of blank paper, of such dazzling whiteness that no one would ever suppose it had been written upon. The saint had reason to look upon this prodigy as the happy effect of perfect contrition: doubtless he was not taken by surprise, for the conversion of that sinner was only one of the fruits of his evangelical labors and eloquent words.

Antony frequently preached upon penance; he made use of every occasion to exhort Christians to the practice of corporal penances. His numerous sermons on that subject bore great fruit. It soon became an ordinary occurrence to see, in all public processions, and above all in those which took place at the end of missions, whole bodies of penitents

disciplining themselves even to blood. This strange sight at first caused great astonishment, but in the end all became accustomed to it; and the earnest exhortations of the saint, who permitted and even openly approved these exercises of bodily penance, brought them gradually into general use. These penitents received the name of Flagellants; we may believe, that if they did not give rise, they at least served as a plea to the heretics of the same name who appeared in Germany toward the end of the thirteenth century, but they had nothing in common save their name, which certainly is no reason to establish a parallel between them.

Chapter XX

*Translation of the Body of Saint Francis of Assissium -
General Chapter of the Friars Minor - Brother Elias
Scandalizes the Order - Antony and Adam of Marisco are
Persecuted - They Take to Flight - Antony and Elias Appear
Before the Pope - Elias is Deposed - Antony Resigns his
Office, and Retires to Mont Della Verna*

The 25th of May, 1230, was a day of rejoicing for the pious inhabitants of Assissium. Everything throughout the city announced some unwonted solemnity: the houses were decorated with garlands of flowers, rich drapery festooned the fronts of the principal buildings, triumphal arches covered with suitable inscriptions were placed at equal distances, and the crowds who thronged the streets seemed overwhelmed with joy and satisfaction. Outside the gates one witnessed a no less interesting sight. About two thousand Friars Minor were encamped in tents; a short distance from their camp were several groups of pilgrims, whom want of shelter had driven from the city to pass the night in the open fields, as well as a crowd of men from all the cities and hamlets around, who were hastening toward Assissium.

What was to happen? Were they expecting a second visit from their venerable and beloved Pontiff, Gregory IX? Was the Emperor at Assissium? No; the solemnity to take place that day was the translation of the body of Saint Francis from the church of Saint George to the beautiful church which had been built upon the Colline d'Enfer, or Infernal Hill, as it was then called, and was to be followed by a general chapter, as had been announced, as early as 1229, to all the brethren in Europe.

The Pope was also expected; he had promised to repair to Assissium, but found it impossible to keep his word. Better days had dawned upon the Church; tempestuous winds had ceased to beat against her, and the horizon seemed everywhere serene; but a multitude of affairs of the greatest importance occupied the attention of the Holy See.

The Pope had, on the 20th of August, 1229, anathematized the Emperor, Frederick II, for the second time; and as he had furthermore declared him deprived of all his rights as a sovereign, he absolved all his subjects, especially the Sicilians, from their oaths of allegiance to him. The Emperor advanced with his army toward the boundaries of the States of the Church, and sent, at the same time, as ambassadors to the Pope, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, Hermann de Salza, with the archbishops of Reggio and Bari, to endeavor to conclude a treaty of peace. This was not effected before the commencement of July; however, hostilities were at once suspended, and Italy could again breathe freely during the negotiations.

The Pope was still at Perouse, when, toward the end of January, 1230, the Tiber overflowed its banks and devastated the surrounding country. By the first of February, the waters, continuing to rise, inundated several streets in Rome, and threatened to destroy the church of Saint Peter. Many men, as well as animals, perished in this inundation. A large quantity of wine and grain was swallowed up by the waves, which, on subsiding, left behind them a multitude of putrified snakes and other offal, which vitiated the air and threatened to produce a terrible pestilence in the city of Rome. The Romans, heretofore so rebellious, finally acknowledged the hand of God in these public calamities, and sent an immediate deputation to Perouse to entreat the Pope to return to them as quickly as possible, and to pardon their offenses against him. Gregory complied with their

request. He quickly repaired to Rome, where he turned his attention toward settling the conditions of pacification with the Emperor. This prevented him from being present at Assisium.

He sent, however, three legates, with rich presents for the new church, consisting of a large golden crucifix, artistically wrought, ornamented with precious stones, and enriched by a large piece of the True Cross of our Divine Lord - of several large silver vases, and of altar-hangings and church vestments, embroidered in gold. He also ordered them to hand to the general of the Franciscans letters patent, wherein he greatly praised Saint Francis, and related a miracle lately wrought in Germany through the merits of the saint. He furthermore sent a large sum of money to be employed in the use of the new church, which he exempted from episcopal jurisdiction, placing it under the immediate dependence of the Holy See; finally, he gave the church of Saint George to Saint Clara.

The solemnity took place on the 25th of May, the vigil of Pentecost. As soon as the procession started toward the church of Saint George, to seek the body of their holy founder, all the bells of the city were rung, and their grave and shrill sounds harmonized with the cries and joyous acclamations with which the people rent the air. After, Brother Elias, general of the Friars Minor, having ascended the pulpit and read the papal letters, they descended into the vault of the church to bring forth the mortal remains of the saint. The precious treasure was brought into the church amid sounds of trumpets, and saluted with joyful acclamations by the people. The three Papal legates took the coffin containing the saint's body upon their shoulders, and bore it, not without great difficulty, through the dense crowd toward the door, where they placed their precious burden upon a triumphal car richly ornamented, which was

drawn by art ox covered with purple cloth. The procession took up its march. The Friars Minor walked first, in double file, each one bearing a palm-branch and a lighted torch, singing in choir the hymn *Proles de cælo prodiit*, which Gregory IX had himself composed in honor of Saint Francis.

The three Papal legates, Brother Elias, the bishops, the clergy, and those Friars Minor who had been named vicars apostolic for the occasion, walked beside the car. They were followed by the magistrates of the city, with a large body of soldiers to keep the crowd in check. The procession stopped before the new church, and the legates were about to take up the coffin to place it in the middle of the church, in order to allow the Friars Minor there present, as well as the people, to contemplate and honor the holy remains; but an unforeseen accident prevented the doing so. The magistrates, fearing, perhaps, that some one might steal their great treasure, and so deprive the city of a powerful protector, rushed forward, notwithstanding the opposition of the vicars apostolic, reached the car, pushed the legates aside, and, seizing the coffin, hastily carried it into the lower part of the church, and placed it in a vault known only to themselves, where it remained undiscovered until the pontificate of Pius VII. This violent proceeding disturbed the ceremony. The Friars Minor were inconsolable at being so unexpectedly deprived of the happiness of viewing the body of their founder. Many of them believed that their general was secretly in league with the podestat of Assissium in his plot to conceal the holy relics. It is certain that Brother Elias, fearing that at some future time the body might be carried off, had caused a secret vault to be built in a spot known only to himself and the podestat; though there is no proof that he was privy to the project of carrying off the body during the ceremony of its translation.

The brethren complained to the Pope, through the instrumentality of the legates. His Holiness hastened to write to the inhabitants of Assissium, to rebuke them for their insolence, and ordered them to send some members of their senate to Rome, to give an account of their conduct. He also wrote to the bishops of Perouse and Spoleto, to recommend their prompt execution of the orders he had given in his former letters.

About the same time the opening of the general chapter took place. Brother Elias, remarking that most of the brethren had become hostile to him, presumed, with reason, that the change with regard to him took its rise in the disappearance of the body of Saint Francis at the time of the late solemnity, and took measures to avert the ill effects of that ever-to-be-regretted occurrence. By skillful maneuvering he obtained from the Pope certain privileges, contrary to the text of his rule: among others, that of holding money in certain specified cases, through the medium of persons not belonging to the order; that kind of proprietorship was directly contrary to the express words of the rule.

Brother Elias was quickly undeceived. In the first session, he made known to the members of the chapter the favors which the Pope had granted to the order; and added that, as he was convinced that it was impossible in so large a congregation to observe the exact rule Saint Francis had prescribed, and that it required, moreover, a perfection which it was unreasonable to expect from all religious indiscriminately, he had applied to the Pope to obtain certain modifications to the rule, in order to quiet the consciences of the brethren.

The members of the chapter received these strange words with a murmur of indignation, they, however, uttered no

protest, and the first session terminated peaceably. But scarcely had the General quitted the chapter-room, when the adherents to regular discipline formed themselves into a council to deliberate upon the steps to be taken in a circumstance at once so painful and perplexing. They feared Elias's irascibility, and that not without reason, for they had already seen that he hesitated at no measure, however rigorous, when the defense of his authority was in question. Therefore, they concluded to abstain for the moment from any decision. Brother Elias renewed his proposition in the next session; but as he pressed the brethren to subscribe to his wishes, Saint Antony and Adam of Oxford, or, as others style him, of Marisco, started up simultaneously and successively proved to the General that the privileges which he had just obtained could only lead to the downfall of the order, and that, consequently, they neither could nor would accept them on any terms.

The courageous opposition of these two holy men was imitated by several other religious, who dared, like them, to speak the truth to their General. Among the latter were the venerable Albert of Pisa, and the Florentine John Bonelli, who had been provincial of Arles since 1224, at which time Antony had preached at the chapter held in that city. Observants, Reformed, or Recollects, etc., are all barefoot, and possess no property. Although these various congregations differ in name, they nevertheless follow the same rule and obey the same General, who holds the seal of Saint Francis. The order has always refused all privileges prohibited by the text of the rule, although several Popes have conceded them on various occasions. Those brethren who accepted the privileges conceded by the Church, separated themselves by permission of Leo IX from the body of the order, and formed a new congregation under their own general: they adopted the name of Friars Minor Conventuals.

We may readily imagine the rage of Elias, especially against the two religious who had spoken out so firmly and courageously. His adherents violently opposed the defenders of regular discipline, styled them schismatics and rebels, and persuaded the General to anathematize Antony and Adam, and even to sentence them to imprisonment. The two Friars appealed from this sentence to the Pope, but they would not have escaped being imprisoned but for the protection of the penitentiary apostolic, who furnished them an opportunity of flight.

As soon as Elias heard of their escape he sent several couriers to overtake them and bring them back under a safe-escort, as he feared they would denounce him to the Pope. The two religious, judging that they would be pursued, quitted the high-road and reached Rome in safety by a more circuitous route.

Meanwhile Brother Elias was suffering great inconvenience at Assissium. A man of eminent sanctity, who enjoyed the esteem of all his brethren, the first companion of Saint Francis, Bernard of Quintavalle, was deeply grieved at the errors of the General; for the latter had reserved for himself a considerable portion of the funds arising from alms collected for the building of the church; he took his meals alone, and caused food of a more delicate kind to be prepared for him; kept a horse and groom at the expense of the community; his apartments in no ways resembled the cell of a Friar Minor, being furnished in the most sumptuous manner. He believed he could lawfully enjoy so commodious and easy a life, in order to guard against bodily infirmities, and to enhance his authority among his brethren.

Such was not the opinion of the more fervent religious, especially of Bernard, who frequently drew near Elias just as

he was mounting his horse, and, clapping his hands as if admiring his equipage, would say, in an ironical tone: -

"Oh, Brother Elias, how vigorous and spirited your horse is!"

Then he would strike the animal lightly on the back, and brush it down with the skirt of his habit, as if he were grooming it. Elias readily perceived the drift of these actions, but feigned not to understand them. One day Bernard quitted the refectory of the religious, and, carrying in one hand a piece of dry bread and in the other a jug of water, entered the general's apartment, and seated himself at his table without waiting for an invitation. Then he said to him: "Brother Elias, I wish to eat with you the food which the Supreme Master of All provides for the poor." Elias dissembled his resentment, and forced a laugh, affecting to see only pure pleasantry in his reproaches. He dared not openly rebuke the saintly old man, lest he should incur the disgust of the whole community. Bernard had been recommended to him in a special manner by Saint Francis, and was generally looked upon as a saint. It was therefore prudent to act cautiously with one who exercised so great an influence on those around him. But of Antony he stood in no dread; the latter was still young, and his influence had more weight with the inhabitants of the surrounding cities and villages than with his brethren, who were older and longer in religion than himself, and with whom he had little intercourse.

However, a courier arrived at Assissium, sent by the court of Rome to cite the General of the Friars Minor, with all the members of the chapter, to appear before the Pope. Gregory had graciously received the two refugees; and being deeply afflicted that an order he so tenderly loved should suffer so much from its own members, in the very first years of its

existence, readily promised to do all in his power to assist the Friars Minor in their critical position.

Elias, and the other brethren to whom belonged the right of voting in chapter, reaching Rome soon after, a new council was called under the presidency of the Pope himself.

Antony of Padua, provincial of Bologna, and Adam of Marisco, in turn, accused the General. They spoke of his ostentatious life, the expense of his horse and groom, the number of his servants, and especially of his proceedings before the Pope, to obtain from him certain privileges not in accordance with the strict observance of the rule.

When the courageous accusers had finished speaking, Brother Elias rose from his seat, and replied in a calm and natural voice: -

"Holy Father, when, after our saintly founder's death, our brethren wished to choose me for general, I refused the dignity, on the ground that I considered my health too feeble to visit all the provinces on foot, and to conform to the common life in all respects; but the electors, persisting in their choice, permitted me to possess money, and to use a horse in case of need. Once installed as general, a horse became indispensable to me; I required a groom to take charge of it; some other servants were equally necessary to fulfill the various missions I was charged with; and, naturally, I needed money for their support. As regards the building of the new church, I have already said - and your Holiness knows it well - that Saint Francis confided to me his last wishes on that head. Finally, I needed the vast sums, which have been everywhere collected, to build a church worthy to possess the precious relics of our holy founder, and to keep alive the remembrance of his virtues. Although necessity and the explicit approbation of my brethren

authorized me to act in this manner, I took no steps without previously conferring with your Holiness, in order to quiet all consciences."

Elias spoke in so dignified a manner, and seemed so convinced of what he was saying, that many members of the chapter believed that he had been falsely accused.

Antony realized that the decisive moment to insure the future well-being of the order was at hand, because, if they approved the conduct of Elias, there would be an end of the rigorous and textual observance of the rule, as all would be naturally led to prefer the more easy life, and the privileges would end by becoming laws. Therefore he rose and addressed the Holy Father in his turn, in the following words:

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"Holy Father, the permission to use money granted to him does not authorize him to accumulate heaps of gold; he was allowed to use a horse, but not to keep up a knightly establishment, to the great scandal of the brethren; he could certainly beg alms from the rich in a prudent manner, when needed for the building of the church, but he was forbidden to ruin the order; and if he had the privilege of taking special care of his bodily wants, he was not expected to lead the life of a prince, and thus weaken the discipline throughout the community. Such, Holy Father! such are the grave abuses of which Brother Elias has been guilty."

This address excited the rage of Elias. Regardless of the august person before him, he rose angrily from his seat, and, turning toward Antony, cried out: -

"Wretch, thou liest!"

He was about to continue; but the Pope, indignant at the unseemly conduct of the General, imposed silence upon

him, and after a moment's reflection said, sighing: -

"Almighty King! in Thy eternal tabernacle, Thou hast foreseen the events which mark the divine epochs of this world here below, and Thou hast revealed many things to come to Thy servant Francis, in the miraculous apparition of that statue of which Thou communicatest to him the mysterious meanings. I fear that the object of those marvelous communications is already realized; yes, I fear that the pure gold of which the head of the statue was formed is losing its brightness, and turning into mean metal. This head which we chose is far different to what it was formerly. We hoped, in said choice, to have benefited the order, since Elias lived in such close intimacy with Saint Francis, but we have been deceived in our expectations, this superior having been more hurtful than serviceable to this order. Therefore, by virtue of the apostolic power, we depose him from his dignities; and we order that, in this present sitting, they do choose a new superior."

Thus spake the Pope, and upon his order the brethren there assembled immediately proceeded to elect a new General. They raised to that high dignity the provincial of Spain, John Parente, or Parent, a Florentine by birth, a man of approved virtue, wise, prudent, and gentle in character, their choice being approved and sanctioned by the Pope. Gregory then declared that Antony and Adam had been unjustly anathematized by Elias; and, in order to give greater weight to that declaration, he raised all the ecclesiastical censures which they might have incurred.

Elias appeared to accept his sentence with humble submission. He renewed before the Pope his formal engagement to follow the rule of the Friars Minor approved by Honorius III, and proceeded at once to the hermitage of Cortona, where he, in company with a few other religious,

began a most austere life. The Pope, not doubting that Elias had repented of his errors, bestowed upon him every mark of interest; he even seemed to regret that so talented a man had no employment in the order. He was re-elected General in 1236, but in 1239 Gregory again deposed him for abuse of the power with which he was invested. As he next attached himself to the court of Frederick II, he was for that reason excommunicated. Later, under Innocent IV, he solicited and obtained that Pontiff's permission to repair to Genoa, where the Friars Minor were holding their general chapter, under the pretense of bearing some advantageous proposition from the Emperor, but in reality to endeavor to be re-elected General. His guilty stratagem was discovered, and the Pope, not content with depriving him of his ancient privileges, ordered him henceforward to submit to the authority of the General like the lowest of the brethren.

Elias could not endure so humble a position. He forthwith quitted the order, to devote himself to the interests of the Emperor. That step drew upon him a second excommunication, which was followed by a declaration from the Pope, by which he was deprived of all his ecclesiastical rights. In 1250, after the Emperor's death, he returned to Cortona, his native city, where he took upon himself the building of a large church for the Friars Minor, with whom, however, he held no relations. Falling dangerously sick in 1253, he repented of his many errors. He implored the Pope to absolve him from his faults, for the love of God and of Saint Francis. He spent eight days in weeping over his numberless sins, and, his death drawing near, he received the visit of the archpriest of Cortona, with five other ecclesiastics, to whom he confessed, with sentiments of sincere contrition, and in presence of three notaries and the first men of the city, all his wrongs toward the Pope and against the order, promising on his oath, should he recover, to go and throw himself at the feet of the Holy Father. He

then made his confession, and received the holy Viaticum from the hands of a Friar Minor. Before receiving the adorable body of Jesus Christ, he recited the Miserere, burst into tears, raised his hands and eyes toward Heaven, and endeavored by sighs and groans to avert the Divine vengeance, and to his latest breath invoked the mercy of God.

"Lord God!" he would repeat, sighing deeply, "enter not into judgment with me, but grant me the pardon of my sins! I entreat Thee by Thy infinite mercy, by the merits of Thy servant Francis, whom I have overwhelmed with contempt and ingratitude, forgive me! forgive me!"

Elias died, as Saint Francis had predicted, outside of the order, but at peace with God.

The Pope rejoiced in the zeal displayed both by Saint Antony and Adam de Marisco against the unhappy tendencies of Elias. His esteem for Antony daily increased, and he desired to attach him henceforth to his court. Our saint could only obtain his dismissal from his provincialship, and all other functions, upon condition of residing at Rome and employing himself in composing sermons and preaching to others both within and without the city. Antony, who did not like the tumult of the capital, and felt the need of a little repose, and perhaps sought also to escape the testimonies of respect which he everywhere received, besought the Holy Father to permit him to go and pass a few days upon the Mount Della Verna, to rest from his labors, and to seek in prayer new strength to enable him to preach the word of God with fresh courage. Gregory would willingly have refused the permission, but he was forced to yield to the saint's importunities. The latter thereupon quitted Rome with the full consent and paternal blessing of the Pope.

Chapter XXI

Mount Della Verna - Antony Chooses a Cell There - Considerations upon the Effects of the Interior Life - Taste of the Writers of the Middle Ages - Antony, Considered both as Preacher and as Writer

While journeying from the States of the Church toward the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, on approaching the Apennines on the side of Borgo di Rassina, an immense rock, rising high above the surrounding mountains, appears in the distance, in the center of the chain of mountains situated between the Tiber and the Arno. This rock is on the top of a mountain whose summit rises more than six thousand Italian feet above the ground, and to which access is had by means of a steep road cut in the rock. This rock is properly known as Monte della Verna, and, in pious language, under the name of Il Sagro Monte, the Holy Mountain. The weather there during the summer season is delightful; and if one cannot compare that abode to a terrestrial paradise, at least there are very few which are better calculated for persons who, tired of the busy world, seek solitude, in order to give themselves up to prayer, and to the contemplation of God in the wonders of nature. Monte della Verna is covered with rich vegetation, although the soil is stony. Here and there, but especially upon the edges of the rock, rise majestic groves of beech and fir trees, interspersed with graceful little greenswards, shaded by tall pines covered with fresh verdure. To the east there is a gentle slope, where a thousand little streamlets spring from the ground; and these latter, gliding peacefully toward the lower mountain, go meandering under the shady pines through glowing prairies. The other sides are very steep, and surrounded by rocks and precipices. From the highest point, looking toward the south,

and below the Franciscan convent, one can perceive the ruins of an old castle, which was formerly the stronghold of the counts of Chiusi. In the beginning of the thirteenth century it was inhabited by the count Orlando Catani, a virtuous and powerful knight, who abandoned the mount to the Friars Minor through consideration for his friend, Saint Francis. From that time until the sixteenth century it served as a residence for a podestat depending upon the Emperor of Germany. Michael Angelo Buonarrotti was the son of one of the podestats who successively resided there. He was born and educated in that so-called fortress, where the permanent spectacle of a nature serene in her grandeur doubtless inspired him with those vast conceptions which we admire in all his masterpieces.

On the west we see the piece of ground where, two years previous to his death, Saint Francis received the stigmata of the Holy Wounds of our Lord, and where a beautiful church has been built. They count, in the space comprised between the east and west, a great number of places sanctified in some sort by the sojourn of the saint of Umbria, and which are dedicated to his memory. On all sides are little churches, oratories, chapels, or grottoes, celebrated either for a miracle, a celestial vision, or some austerity practiced by Saint Antony. Around these memorable spots, at irregular distances, are many little cells, built by pious Friars Minor, who desire to hold converse with God, and to renew their zeal for working in the Lord's vineyard within sight of the glorious theater of the sublime contemplations of their holy founder.

On a beautiful day in June of the year 1230, a young Friar Minor was climbing the sacred mountain; he was directing his steps toward the convent of the brethren of his order, situated on the south of the rock, near the gentle slope we have spoken of. The monks recognized in the pale and

sickly-looking young man the celebrated Portuguese, Brother Antony, whose renown had spread throughout the two kingdoms of France and Italy. They rejoiced greatly at his unexpected arrival, for they hoped that he had come to reside in their convent, to edify them by his example and discourse, as had been the case in so many other places; but Antony declared that he had climbed the mountain for no other purpose than to occupy himself with God in the strictest solitude; therefore begged permission to build himself a small hut, far from the abode of the brethren, and a little below the second cell of Saint Francis. His request was at once granted. Later, on the same spot, a spacious and beautiful chapel was built, which covers the space occupied by the cells of Saint Francis and Saint Antony of Padua.

We will not strive to depict the life led by our fervent Friar Minor in his charming solitude; we could not, if we would, since materials are wanting; but as we have already learned to appreciate the saint's noble character, we can readily divine the holy exercises to which he consecrated all his time. He had long sighed for solitude, and, notwithstanding his zeal for souls, he needed the motive of religious obedience to return to the world; his choice naturally led him to a life of calm interior prayer. His soul, exempt from all care, found in it complete repose; he tasted therein the sweetest enjoyments; not those enjoyments which flatter the senses, but those celestial delights which promote the growth of the soul, and teach her to know and enjoy God, and which we must experience fully to understand. The care of the body becomes painful to the soul who enjoys such happiness; bodily satisfactions fill her with bitterness, and she feels ashamed, as a member of Jesus Christ, to enjoy earthly pleasures while her Head is crowned with thorns, and she overwhelms her body with labor and austerities.

"Interior life," says a Christian philosopher, "purifies the sensual life of man; it is the re-establishing of the spirit in his primitive state; it is his triumph over nature and over the body, who have bowed him toward Earth since the original fall. Monastic life especially frees man from earthly trammels through the exercise of bodily mortifications, which violently sever it from the exterior world; and as nutrition is an operation in which nature is the principal agent, it is especially in that physiological phenomenon that we can ascertain the action of grace upon man. After the soul, strengthened by grace, has said to greedy Nature, 'So far, but no farther!' one would say that the organs of animal life contract and close; abstinence takes away all desire of bodily nourishment; and the operations of nature, limited to the functions of nutrition, insensibly become less frequent and less lively, sometimes even ceasing action entirely. Then the soul desires nothing more than spiritual nourishment; she loses herself in the love of God, and begins a new life; she reunites all her forces, and concentrates them in the enjoyment of the most sublime celestial delights."

Why, then, should we be surprised that Saint Antony rudely chastised his body, and, so to say, exhausted his strength by an almost continual fast? Love of his God led him to render himself like his crucified Model. He served as food to his soul, and sustained his failing strength in such a manner that he could say with all truth: I nourish myself with an invisible food, which carnal men know not of.

However, the continual exercise of penance acted more painfully upon Antony on Monte della Verna than on Mount Saint Paul, a few years previously. Then he was still in the flower of age, and had not become weakened by preaching and the administration of the sacrament of penance; now he appeared too exhausted to continue his apostolic labors. We can easily form an idea of all he had had to suffer in the

different missions he had formerly preached; being very stout, and of a sanguine constitution, he could hardly support the great heats and other incommodities inseparable from the functions of a preacher.

The saint had already entered upon the last year of his life, and the Spirit of God pressed him to return to his beloved city of Padua. Winter was rapidly approaching, and he knew that Monte della Verna was uninhabitable during that season of the year. With this end in view, he finished the sermons which Gregory had desired him to write during his solitude, and made ready to return to Padua late in the autumn. But, before following him into that city, let us cast a glance upon the works which he has left us, and consider him closely as a preacher: this study will furnish us an opportunity to set forth some reflections upon pulpit eloquence in the thirteenth century.

In order thoroughly to judge the literary productions of former times, we should take note of the manners, habits, predominant opinions, and degree of civilization of the different epochs. We should risk giving false and unjust judgments, if, instead of considering the literary or artistic works from their authors' point of view, we should undertake to appreciate them upon individual conceptions drawn out by modern civilization.

The beautiful is, they say, the splendor of the true, and remains invariably the same at all times. This is true, not only as regards the beautiful, but also as to the sublime. Whatever is not the expression or faithful imitation of beautiful Nature, of Nature such as she should be, is completely foreign both to the beautiful and to the sublime. Artistic productions which represent Nature, such as she is or even such as she should be, but which paint her under colors and with circumstances which do not become her,

give wrong notions of the beautiful and the sublime, and false ideas of the real nature of both the one and the other. This character indicates how far public taste has become perverted and corrupted, since the beautiful, as a fundamental and essential part of literature, is felt and admired at all times. But where shall we find the cause of this diversity of taste? History teaches us that it should have its principles and reasons. Let us try to enter somewhat into details: they will not only aid us to judge scientifically of the sacred eloquence of the Middle Ages, but they will also give us some idea of the development of intellect and the mechanism of the belles-lettres of those times: -

Art and literature are the expression of what is most exalted in society, namely, thought. We therefore find in each author the impress of the manners of his era. He reproduces in his writings the religious and political opinions as well as the customs of his time, and even adopts its prejudices. It is but too true that the greater part of authors suffer themselves to be drawn away by the predominant feeling of their day, and few there are who are capable of overstepping at a bound the distance which divides them by many centuries from that one in which they live.

From time to time men rise up who surpass their contemporaries by their intellectual superiority; their glance embraces a vaster field, and they unite to a pure taste a marvelous facility in properly expressing the beautiful and the sublime. They understand the wants of their time, and endeavor to provide for them. Therefore they consider it specially indispensable to raise themselves above those opinions and prejudices which sway the public mind: thus being, so to say, in advance of their age, they are neither understood nor appreciated by their contemporaries. Such men serve as points of transition to a better epoch; but they rarely reap the fruits of their own labors. All reform, even

that of letters, is slowly brought about, and only established after having surmounted the greatest obstacles. Its beginning is little remarked, and those who are carried away by the predominant ideas of their age, imagine themselves to be giving impetus to the intellectual movement, because they loudly proclaim the self-styled wisdom of their rash and chimerical conceptions. However, history, which judges the reform, discovers both its beginning and grounds; then it is that the merit of those men of genius who have rendered real service to society at last appears in its true glory.

Let us be understood here as speaking especially of form in art and letters, of the manner of exposing ideas and rendering them sensible to the external senses; for we shall have other means of reform to point out, and, in the first place, that of the Christian religion, if we wish to examine into the nature of ideas and opinions. Antiquity, drawing her inspiration from the exterior world, excelled in form, in the art of depicting material and passionate nature; Christianity, on the contrary, repudiating from the outset all pagan ideas, neglected beauty of form, to give herself up exclusively to the study of moral and supernatural beauty.

This fact being well established, we are led to inquire to which branch of human knowledge it belonged to give, at different times, the sequel of a happy revolution in the perception of and taste for the beautiful? Without deciding this question, we will nevertheless say that that task did not devolve upon sacred eloquence. The Christian orator follows intellectual progress, but does not anticipate it. For if he sought, in imitation or genius, to take flight and raise himself above the conceptions of his age, to purify the taste of his contemporaries, and, finally, to combat all prejudices against art and literature, he would weaken his power and injure his true mission. He would not be understood by the people, whom he should approach on their weak side, and

insinuate himself into their hearts and minds, in order to convince and persuade them of truths which, at first view, might, perhaps, shock their reason. He should then conform himself to their taste, and bring down his learning within reach of their intelligence, and become even simple, but without platitude or triviality. If, on one side, we hold that the preacher should practically adopt the public taste, we should require, on the other hand, that he should keep himself up to the highest point of civilization reached by the age in which he lives; by that means he will acquire the glory, if not of equaling the progress of genius, at least of seconding it by his efforts, and diffusing the principles of good taste.

Christianity had taken no interest in the perfecting of artistic taste until the thirteenth century; the arts even seemed to have retrograded since the fusion of the inhabitants of the North with those of the South. But this backward movement was only so in appearance; already a better era was dawning: the Crusades in the East and the wars against the Moors in Spain had brought Christians into contact with the Arabs. These events gave a new aspect to Europe, for they seemed to change the ideas as well as the tendencies of art and taste.

The songs in the mother-tongue of the Troubadours and Trouvères of France and Languedoc found a loud echo in Italy and Catalonia and the German minstrels lost at the court of Frederick II that rudeness of manner which is yet visible in the *Nibelungen* and the *Kudrunerlieder*. This double fact gave signs of the approaching advent of a national literature and the rapid perfection of the nascent languages.

What was the Church doing at that time? The Church held herself prudently aloof from the general movement, waiting

a better time to take her part therein: she could not consistently unite her voice with those of the poets, who sang the praises of schismatics and the doctrines of heretics, or who, as voluptuous Mussulmans, celebrated in their songs the charms of sensual love. Catholic ideas first saw light in the works of Dante, then in those of Spanish chivalry.

Nevertheless, the Christian schools, by admitting the writings of Aristotle, came also under Arab influence. Soon all the universities adopted the peripatetic method for teaching theology; the rapid progress made in all sacred sciences by means of this eminently logical method did not, however, prevent its producing some unfavorable results. The spirit of classification reigned in every branch of science, and was even carried to excess; they ventured further and further into the domain of the possible, and pretended to find instruction in the least remarkable parts of the Sacred Scriptures, even in mere proper names. We recognize this latter defect in the written sermons of Saint Antony of Padua; but we must here observe that the saint made his first studies in Portugal, where, as well as in Spain, the numerous relations with both Jews and Arabs generally established a sort of onomatology, or, according to the Jewish expression, of Kabala. This still existed in Spain in the sixteenth century.

We can readily understand that such a method of instruction could not greatly contribute to the progress of letters, the more so as, not content with applying it to eloquence, they also made use of it in poetry.

As regards pulpit eloquence, it was thought necessary to follow the same method as the doctors, because the instruction given to the people was no other than theological teaching, or the explanation of the Sacred Scriptures after a more circumscribed plan. But as those

ages, as we have seen, were ages of faith, when the mental development was far from its height, it was not requisite, in public instructions, to choose in a thorough manner the proofs of Catholic belief; still less, to entangle one's self in the metaphysical depths of Christianity. It then sufficed to teach the faithful their duties, and to explain to them the religious precepts and mysteries contained in the Holy Gospel. This is what we find in those instructions called Homilies left us by the Middle Ages, for hitherto there has been no question of controversies with the heretics, nor of sermons, properly so called, of both of which we shall speak later. These different qualities characterized the written sermons, or, to speak more correctly, the familiar instructions of Saint Antony of Padua. Far from blaming everything contained in the writings of the Middle Ages, like many too severe critics; far from unreservedly pointing out the defects in those sacred discourses, the greater part of which were only promptuaires, or collections of texts, we will content ourselves with saying that such instructions were sufficient for the spiritual wants of the people, and contained pure and solid doctrine, as we see from many learned writers, among others, Dr. Hurter, in his valuable analysis of the "Letters and Sermons of Pope Innocent III."

What end have we in view in these different considerations? Is it to form a true judgment of the talent of the Christian orators of the Middle Ages? By no means: our intention has simply been to prove, on one side, that they cannot be accused of being wrong in remaining on a level with the taste of their age, since Christian eloquence required it, and to show, on the other, the intrinsic value and real utility of the written instructions of those times. We have not, therefore, either described or been able to judge of the oratorical qualifications of preachers whose very works are wanting, since, according to every appearance, they did not write their sermons.

Zeal animated those holy preachers, who, like Saint Antony of Padua, were convinced and penetrated by what they were saying, and burned with love of God and their neighbor. True zeal is always eloquent. Thus these men of faith accomplished wonders; and we can form an idea of the intrinsic value of their sermons from the fruits of salvation they brought forth in the souls of their hearers, aided, of course, by Divine Grace. Let us remark, also, that the preachers of the southern countries of Europe possessed a further advantage: they could address themselves to the imagination with a certainty of success, and adorn their sermons by ravishing descriptions of nature, as we learn in the lives of Saint Francis of Assissium and others, and can prove by reference to the written instructions of our saint. As to the frequent employment of the Sacred Scriptures with which they tax the taste of the Middle Ages, we may remark that scriptural quotations could not be numerous in mission sermons, since the popular preachers, especially the Friars Minor, preached generally in the mother-tongue of their audience, as we learn from the historian Hurter.

It would, perhaps, be well to give our readers some extracts from Saint Antony's instructions; but as we have already been sufficiently prolix on the subject of his eloquence, we will content ourselves with referring to those passages quoted in the eighth chapter of this work, and end our reflections on this topic by a rapid glance at the writings of our saint, which have been edited by Father de la Haye.

The learned editor places in the second rank, immediately after his sermons, a mystical explanation of the books of the Old Testament, and some fragments of those of the New, forming together the manuscript which he discovered, at the time when he was visitor, in the library of one of the convents in Lorraine. These explanations are merely composed of allegories and scriptural sentences, which may

be considered as pious meditations; but which are not, however, brought into connection with the literal sense of the Sacred Books. This, most of them are, strictly speaking, but simple annotations (*notae marginales*), written by Saint Antony in the same style as those we read in his Psalter; or, perhaps, notes collected by his disciples and carefully preserved. The editor adopts this latter supposition.

Next in order comes a work which is very remarkable, since, as Wadding assures us, Saint Antony of Padua is the author. Its title is, "Moral Concordances of the Bible" (*Concordantiae Morales Bibliorum*), and is, doubtless, the first work of the kind ever brought to light. It is composed of five books, which are divided and subdivided. The first book treats of the fall of man, and the means of repairing it; the second, of penance and the conversion of sinners, the third, of the defeats and victories of the converted sinner, in his spiritual fight; the fourth, of perfection and the obstacles to be surmounted in attaining it; and finally, the fifth, of the duties of the different states of life, particularly those of priests, superiors, and preachers. We easily perceive that Saint Antony must have been one of the first theologians who conceived and executed a complete plan of moral theology. This is clearly proven by the subject matter, which forms the subdivisions of each of the five books of his great work. If we consider that this important writing served our saint as an arsenal wherein he sought arms with which to fight against the predominant vices of his age, it will be easy to understand the high esteem which he enjoyed, as well as the holy and courageous liberty with which he pursued vice wherever it reigned - sparing, when duty required it, neither bishops, clerks, nor religious, but placing the truth before all without respect of persons. He can also form a just idea of his merit as a preacher, by reading the rules he lays down in the fifth book for all preachers, and which are not merely

calculated to render the Divine Word useful to the faithful, but tend equally to sanctify those who preach it.

Let those, then, who wish to study the customs of the Middle Ages, and understand the abuses and predominant vices, read the writings left us by Saint Antony, without either indulgence or prejudice for the faults of taste or art. We assure them they will there find sufficient to satisfy their curiosity.

Chapter XXII

Antony Preaches for the Last Time at Padua - He Sets Out for Campo San Pietro - Last Sickness and Death of Antony - He Appears to the Abbot of Vercelli - Civil Discord at Padua - Burial of the Body of Saint Antony - Pilgrimages to his Tomb

An unusual crowd filled the Streets of Padua on the first Sunday in Lent of the year 1231. All were hastening toward the city gates to go out into a neighboring field, where a pulpit had been erected. They were impatient to see it occupied by the illustrious and beloved preacher. Saint Antony had gone directly to Padua, on leaving the solitude of Monte della Verna, without, however, having determined to preach the Lent there that year. He had many tasks to fulfill; and, at the request of Cardinal Rinaldo, had just undertaken the composition of sermons for the feasts of the saints. But at the approach of the forty days of penance prescribed by the Church, his zeal became so inflamed, and the good inhabitants of Padua so urgent, that he determined to break - for the last time, alas! - the bread of the Divine Word to the faithful, and to exhort sinners to repent of their sins. They were obliged, as we have said, to raise a pulpit in a large field, because the constantly increasing numbers, both from within and without the city, formed too large an audience to be contained in the largest church in Padua.

Our saint preached daily, notwithstanding his failing strength. He gave, beside his sermons, private instructions to all sort of persons who came to consult him; passing the rest of the day in his confessional, where he sometimes remained until very late in the evening, without taking any nourishment.

As soon as the inhabitants of the cities around Padua learned that Saint Antony was preaching there, they flocked thither in crowds to hear him. Many of them, says Wadding, rose at midnight, to be the first to reach the chair of truth, and to secure a place where they could easily hear the preacher. Being, for the most part, provided with lanterns, they seemed to wander about the fields like *feux-follet*, or will-o'-the-wisps. Soldiers, women of rank, children, all persons in fact, flocked toward Padua, and those even who ordinarily passed the best hours of the day in bed, who had perhaps never risen before dawn, urged on by example, were early afoot to hasten to hear the sermons of the holy preacher. This numerous auditory were chiefly remarkable for the simplicity of their dress: knowing that rich clothing, especially during Lent, was displeasing to the saint, they dressed themselves as plainly as the nature of the circumstances required.

The bishop of Padua, with his clergy, assisted at all Antony's sermons. That worthy pastor, fully convinced of the good wrought by the saint amid his flock, wished to serve as an example to his sheep, and encourage them to persevere in their assiduous attendance at the mission.

Profound silence, broken by no noise, reigned throughout the vast auditory of Saint Antony, which sometimes counted thirty thousand souls. The shops and warehouses were closed during the sermons, and the streets of Padua were as solitary and deserted as those of an abandoned city. Crowds followed him when he turned his steps homeward; each one wished to see him close by, and to touch him; and those nearest to him cut off small pieces of his habit, which they carried off and preserved as a precious treasure.

Perhaps our saint had never before gained such a victory over Hell. It was to be feared, however, that grace, which

seemed to follow Antony's steps, would meet with great obstacles in so corrupt a city as Padua. This fear was not realized. All those who heard the preacher submitted to his powerful words, which had caused princes to tremble on their thrones, and which now filled with dismay the consciences and growled like thunder over the heads of hardened sinners.

But the enemy of man's salvation could not endure the marvelous effects of apostolic zeal; his fury against the poor Friar Minor, who daily snatched fresh souls from his claws, knew no bounds; he therefore set to work to endeavor to cause the zealous missionary to sink under the weight of his holy labors.

The spirit of darkness chose to set a snare for Antony at the very moment when, tired and worn out by a day of extraordinary fatigue, he went at night to his cell in order to rest and recruit his strength by a few hours' sleep. He had scarcely extended his limbs upon his wretched bed when, attacked by the evil spirit, he felt himself almost suffocated, and found no other means of calming his anguish than by having recourse to prayer; therefore, arming himself with the sacred Sign of the Cross, he invoked the Mother of God, saluting her with these words of a hymn: "O gloriosa Domina!" That invocation put the Devil to flight, and completely tranquilized Antony, who, upon casting his eyes around him, as he himself related to one of the brethren, saw his cell miraculously lighted up. Antony kept up his apostolic labors until the approach of Pentecost. The rapidly increasing weakness of his health soon forced him to discontinue his preaching, which he did the more willingly as the time of harvest was at hand. The society of men had beside become irksome and fatiguing to him, and he sighed more ardently than ever for solitude. Although the saints have not always a foreknowledge of their departure from this

world, they have a certain presentiment of the day of their death, which never deceives them. Toward the end of their lives their union with God becomes closer; they are disgusted with the world, and find peace nowhere but in solitude: in the fervor of their prayers they seem even to embrace the Divinity itself; and the pious transports of their souls seem more frequent than ever. Their zeal for the salvation of souls seems weakened, for God turns all their attention from earthly things, gives to their minds perfect peace, and prepares them, by closer and sweeter communications, to pass from this transitory life to the life of the blessed in Heaven.

Such were the operations of Divine mercy with regard to Antony, and his brethren doubted not that his end was approaching; our saint knew, by revelation, the very hour of his death; but the fear of needlessly grieving his brethren induced him to withhold it from them.

In order to avoid the noise of the city, he concluded to retire into a small convent situated in the environs of Padua, and end his days there. Although he was authorized to fix his residence where he would, he nevertheless wrote to the provincial to obtain a permission to change his abode - preferring to obey as a simple religious than to act according to his own will. When his letter was written he went to the cell of the guardian to ask for a messenger to carry it to its destination. Having obtained his request, he returned to his cell to get the letter to be sent; but, strange to say, he could not find it. After a moment's reflection he inferred from its singular disappearance that God willed him to remain at the convent of Padua, and gave up all idea of quitting it. But a few days later the provincial answered him, saying that he might take up his residence in any convent he chose. It is generally believed that a heavenly messenger conveyed Antony's letter to his superior; a miracle by which God,

doubtless, wished to show the pleasure He took in Antony's obedience. The saint humbly and lovingly thanked God for the favor he had received, and chose for his final residence the quiet and peaceful convent of Campo San Pietro. This was a little village situated about three leagues from Padua, composing, with several hamlets, a little domain placed under the jurisdiction of the chevalier Tiso, a man of exemplary morality, and greatly devoted to the Friars Minor, who, as soon as he learned that Antony had come to reside on his domain, went to meet him with several of his domestics, approached him respectfully, and conducted him himself to the village where the friars dwelt. Antony, fearing that too many would come to interrupt his solitude, asked the chevalier if he did not know, in any of his forests, a solitary and desolate spot where he could quietly hold converse with God. Tiso answered him that if he would follow him he would show him a spot which would perfectly suit him, and that he would cause a hermitage to be built there, which he could occupy as long as he pleased. This answer fully satisfied the saint, who thereupon bade adieu to his brethren and set out with the chevalier and his usual companions, Lucas Belludino, and Ruggiero.

When our travelers had journeyed two miles from the abode of the brethren, they entered a little grove, where they noticed a spot covered with verdure, which presented the most charming abode one could imagine. This pleasant spot was in the middle of the grove, and shaded by high trees which sheltered it from the burning rays of the sun. An immense walnut-tree grew near by, having six large branches covered with thick foliage, extending themselves horizontally, and whose vertex formed a crown of verdure, leaving a remarkably large hollow underneath. Antony begged that they would build him a little cell in that hollow, where he might occupy himself with the contemplation of God far from men, and in repose both of heart and soul. Tiso

at once complied with the saint's desire; and even built two other cells under the shade of the walnut-tree, one for Brother Lucas and the other for Brother Ruggiero.

Antony passed several weeks in that humble abode, amid the most perfect repose and the sweetest consolations, preparing himself for the great voyage toward the other world. As he was naturally of a strong and healthy constitution, his brethren hoped that the rest he was taking would soon restore him to health, but their hope was soon undeceived, for Antony's death was much nearer than they imagined. Coming down one day from his tree, to dine, as usual, with his brethren, on seating himself at table he suddenly fainted; on recovering, he felt so weak as to be unable to sit upright. However, he made great efforts to get out into the open air, but, sinking down again, fell upon a bed of straw spread in one corner of the cell.

Antony, not doubting that his end was near, addressed the following words to Brother Ruggiero:

"Dear brother, if you are willing, I should like to return to the convent of Saint Mary, in Padua, in order to avoid troubling the brethren who live near here."

Brother Ruggiero, who could not restrain his tears, readily consented, and went in search of a chariot to transport the invalid. But when the neighboring brethren heard that Antony was about to leave them, they gathered round his bed, and begged him, with tears in their eyes, to remain among them, assuring him a thousand times that he could give them no trouble, that they would pay him every attention his state demanded, and that he should want for nothing. But he, persisting in his first resolution, bade a last adieu to his brethren, after which Brothers Lucas and

Ruggiero placed him in the chariot, and set out on their journey.

Upon approaching Padua, they met with a Friar Minor who was going to Campo San Pietro to visit our saint. He, struck by Antony's pale and emaciated appearance, dissuaded him from going to Padua, where, overrun with visitors, he could not be sure of one moment for the rest so necessary to him in his present state, and advised him to go to the convent of Poor Clares, in the vicinity; adding that the brethren charged with the spiritual direction of the religious, who had a cell there, would not fail to give him all possible and necessary care.

Antony, relishing his counsel, begged his two companions to carry him to Arceli. The brethren there received the saint as a precious gift from Heaven, and tended him with anxious solicitude. But his malady had progressed to such an extent that no human remedy could reach it. He did not wish to recover, being impatient to throw off all earthly bonds, to go and live with Jesus Christ. He prayed uninterruptedly, and frequently was seen to be transported with admiration and joy by the contemplation and anticipated possession of his God.

On Friday, the 13th of June, he confessed and communicated early in the morning; he then intoned, in a weak and broken voice, his favorite hymn, O gloriosa Domina; after which he remained some moments motionless, his eyes raised toward Heaven, and his face shining like that of a seraph. They asked him what he was looking at so attentively.

"Brothers," he answered, "I see my Lord!"

These words convinced the brethren that his last hour was at hand. One of them, a priest, started to go to the oratory to bring the holy oils, to give the dying man extreme unction. Antony, understanding his object, said to him:

"I carry that unction in the depths of my soul, consequently it is not necessary for me to receive it exteriorly; nevertheless, I desire it may be administered to me, because the sacrament is useful."

He was at once anointed, after which he raised his hands and eyes toward Heaven, and recited, with loving devotion, the seven penitential psalms, uniting his voice to the trembling voices of his brethren, who knelt sobbing round his bed. Then he prayed silently for the space of one half-hour; his prayer finished, he peacefully yielded up his soul to God.

Saint Antony died at the age of thirty-six years; ten of which he had passed among the Friars Minor, and eleven among the Augustinians. His death was followed by that of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, the widow of the noble Landgrave Louis, who died in Italy on his way to Jerusalem as a crusader. The same year two Friars Minor sealed their doctrine with their blood, at Valentia, in Spain.

At the very moment Saint Antony died, his former master, the abbot of Vercelli, was studying the Scriptures in his cell. Suddenly the door opened, and his beloved Antony appeared before him and spoke as follows: -

"Lo, Lord Abbot, having left the ass at Padua, I am hastening to our country!"

The saint had drawn near to the abbot while uttering these words; then he touched the latter on the throat, from which he had been suffering greatly, and vanished.

The abbot felt his throat instantaneously cured by the saint's touch, and was amazed at his sudden disappearance. He thought that Antony, on his way to Portugal, had stopped to take a final farewell of him. Therefore, quitting his cell, he went through the entire convent, asking all the monks he met with if they had not seen Antony. These latter all answered, no. The abbot, greatly surprised and afflicted, returned to his cell; but, having reflected a little on what had happened, he understood that the saint had appeared to announce his death to him, which supposition was soon confirmed by news he received from Padua.

Meanwhile, the Friars Minor endeavored to keep Antony's death secret, to avoid too great a concourse of people; but their precautions were useless. Troops of children ran through the streets of Padua, crying out loudly, "The saint is dead! Saint Antony is no more!" The sad news quickly spread throughout the city; a great number of the citizens hastened out of it to go and venerate the saint's body. The inhabitants of Capo del Ponte, near to the convent of Arceli, went thither fully armed, and surrounded it, in order to prevent the transportation of the holy remains, which they earnestly desired might be buried in their vicinity. Antony's death caused a general mourning, especially among the religious of Saint Clare, who deplored the loss of one from whom they had received such salutary instructions, and had, under his skillful direction, been guided and sustained in the road of evangelical perfection; therefore these holy women did all in their power to keep the mortal remains of their spiritual director. But the brethren of the convent of Saint Mary, at Padua, brought forward many claims to the sacred deposit, alleging principally the last wishes of the saint, by which his body was to be taken to their church. No one dared oppose this last argument, and the brethren of Saint Mary's convent set out for Arceli, to bring back the saint's body.

But as soon as the citizens of Capo del Ponte heard of this project, they hastily sent the guard which they had formed to surround the convent and the abode of the brethren, in order to bar all access to the Paduan friars. These latter laid their complaint before the bishop, who assembled the chapter to deliberate upon the course to be pursued under the circumstances. The canons were somewhat divided in opinion: some thought it right to leave the saint's body where it then was; others, on the contrary, proposed to follow the advice of the bishop, who considered the reasons brought forward by the brethren too well-founded not to be yielded to. Therefore the worthy prelate begged the magistrates to give the latter all the aid requisite to carry out their just pretensions. The citizens of Capo del Ponte had already prepared to bury Antony's body, and to prevent, by armed force if necessary, all attempts made by the city troops for its removal. They were thoroughly discontented, and it was greatly feared that any act of aggression might incite them to some deeds of violence. The Friars Minor, those of Padua as well as those of Arceli, were greatly troubled that the desire to possess the mortal remains of the saint, which should be for each one a pledge of peace, gave rise to such animosity and discord as to threaten bloodshed, and earnestly besought the armed citizens to refrain from acting until the arrival of their provincial, who would decide upon the course to be pursued. All readily agreed to temporize awhile.

Toward night the brethren caused the crowd, which had assembled to venerate the saint's body, to quit the church; they then closed and locked it, and watched it closely all night, to prevent any attempt to break it open. At midnight an alarm was given; the population of Capo del Ponte, distrusting the brethren, who they feared might carry off the precious treasure by night, rushed, almost to a man, toward Arceli, to see the remains once more. The angry multitude

easily forced the locks of the church, the doors yielding instantly; but they strove in vain to penetrate into the convent. Why was this? No one could tell. Three times they endeavored to carry the place by assault. Three times they were repulsed by an invisible hand; and, although they had plenty of light, they could not succeed in finding the entrance. The next morning, at daybreak, the people flocked to the convent. Saint Antony seemed sleeping peacefully. Not the least change appeared in his features, to which a slight tinge of color gave life and expression; his limbs had retained all their flexibility. The crowd rapidly increased as soon as the Paduans heard that the saint's body was exposed to public veneration; every one wished to see and touch it; and those who could not succeed in piercing the crowd and approaching the body, passed cords, rings, keys, and pieces of money through the windows to those inside the church, begging them to apply them to the saintly remains.

Meanwhile, the friars were greatly disquieted by the prolonged absence of their provincial. Fearing lest the excessive heat might affect the saint's body, they enclosed it in a wooden coffin, which they buried, merely covering it slightly with earth. However quietly this was done, it could not long remain a secret to the people, who hurried to Arceli, armed with sticks and swords, forced open a second time the door of the convent, and quickly found the buried treasure; but they were so fully persuaded that the saint's remains had actually been carried off, that they would not believe that his body reposed in the coffin, notwithstanding the oath of the friars who had placed it there.

The brethren knew not how to quiet the tumult; but they soon realized that we sometimes escape from peril at the very moment we seem about to perish therein, for while they were vainly striving to restore peace, their provincial

appeared. The sight of their superior gave them fresh courage, though the inhabitants of the place, unshaken in their resolution, endeavored to gain him over to their interests, if not by persuasion, at least by threats. They laid before him their wishes, urging that the saint ought to be buried where he had died; that they should insist upon it; and that they knew how to defend their right by force of arms, if necessary. The provincial saw that he had to deal with angry men, capable of committing the greatest excesses rather than to renounce their design; therefore he spoke to them in an authoritative tone, and in strong and fearless language

"My brethren," he said, "you cannot prove your rights, or what you call your rights; but if you ask as a favor to be allowed to retain the saint's body among you, we will consult with our brethren as to what is best to be done, and we will do as God will direct us. Meanwhile, I will cheerfully allow you to keep a guard over the spot where Father Antony's body lies, in order that you may cease to disturb us."

The provincial set out at once for Padua, and, on the morning after his arrival there, went before the podestat, who had assembled his council. The superior set forth his causes of uneasiness, and implored the aid and protection of the magistrates. The podestat and his counselors, entering into the views of the provincial, sent a large body of armed men to guard the convent of Arceli, and publicly announced that no one carrying arms should dare approach the convent, nor trouble the brethren, until the bishop and his clergy had taken a decisive step in the matter, and that any one who should infringe this order should be fined one hundred pounds.

The following day the bishop held a council, and summoned before him both the Friars Minor of Padua and the deputies

of Capo del Ponte, in order that each party, through their own representatives, might plead their cause. When the prelate had heard and weighed the reasons brought forward on both sides, he pronounced in favor of the provincial, and ordered that on the next morning the clergy of the city, as well as the citizens, should assemble to assist at the burial of Antony. He ordered the members of the administration to watch, that no disturbance should take place during the solemnity, and to protect the brethren from all annoyance on the part of the country people. The magistrates readily undertook this duty, and immediately built a bridge of boats over the Astico, in order to prevent the funeral procession from passing through Capo del Ponte, the ordinary route from Arceli to Padua.

The inhabitants of the former place were furiously enraged, and resolved to be revenged upon the provincial, whom they accused of deceiving them. They cut the bridge, and the boats which formed it were carried away by the force of the current before any one was aware of their design. The citizens and students of Padua, irritated in their turn, took up arms; and as their anger was as great as that of the inhabitants of Capo del Ponte, all anticipated a bloody fight. But the podestat, without waiting for the outbreak, sent heralds among the opponents to summon them all to appear before him at the town-house. This measure calmed the bitter feelings of both parties; it even roused the hopes of those of Capo del Ponte that their rights might be recognized. All set out at once for Padua.

The inhabitants of Capo del Ponte, on arriving before the town-house, at once realized that they placed themselves completely in the power of the Paduans. Flight itself was an impossibility, for the citizens and city troops, far more numerous than themselves, surrounded them on all sides. The podestat then declared to them that, not recognizing

their pretended rights, no notice would be taken of them; furthermore, that the solemnity should take place in spite of all their opposition, and that he strongly advised them not to disturb the proceedings. This declaration made and understood, he ordered the principal instigators of the revolt to be seized as hostages, and the other rioters, who were forbidden to return home that day, to be guarded in different parts of the city.

Order being re-established, the procession repaired to Arceli to receive the body of Saint Antony. The Friars Minor headed the cortege; next came the coffin, carried by the podestat and the members of his council; the bishop and all his clergy followed; a body of soldiers brought up the rear, and were closely pressed upon by an immense multitude of people from all the surrounding country. They set out from Arceli, singing hymns and carrying lighted torches. Having traversed Capo del Ponte, and the principal streets of Padua, they halted at the church of Saint Mary; the bishop sang a solemn mass of requiem, after which they interred the body of Saint Antony, who had been dead five days.

Many miracles took place that day at the saint's tomb; the sick, who were enabled to touch the stone which covered the holy remains, were instantly cured; and those who were kept away by the crowd had only to invoke the saint's name to be freed from their infirmities; the blind recovered their sight, the deaf their hearing, paralytics and cripples the use of their limbs, and the dumb were heard to sing the praises of God and Saint Antony.

Those citizens of Capo del Ponte who had aided in breaking the bridge of boats, led by their clergy and preceded by the banners of their various confraternities, came barefoot and weeping to prostrate themselves at the glorious tomb, where they humbly asked pardon from God and their patron, Saint

Antony, for the great excesses of which they had been guilty.

The day following, the knights and ladies of rank came to kneel at the tomb of the blessed Friar Minor, and made offerings there. The church of Saint Mary was constantly filled. There was the bishop of Padua, followed by the clergy of the city, and a crowd of people, who, after a short prayer before the blessed sacrament, went to venerate the saint's tomb; the members of the university, barefoot, and headed by their masters, came to offer a taper in honor of the saintly deceased; all, in short, even the podestat and his counselors, far from thinking it unworthy of their dignity to offer their respectful homage to the mortal remains of the poor Friar Minor whom God had honored in so striking a manner, came with the rest to deposit their gifts and offerings.

The tomb of Saint Antony quickly became celebrated throughout all Catholic Europe, and one of the principal pilgrimages of the time. Besides the Italians from all the surrounding cities and towns, there came thither Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen, Germans, and even Slavonians, better known in our day under the names of Hungarians and Poles. Their offerings were chiefly wax tapers; according to the chroniclers, some were elegantly ornamented, and of so large a size that they could not be placed upright, nor carried into the church without being shortened a little; some even were so heavy as to require chariots for their transportation. The concourse of people was often so great that a crowd stood before the church unable to penetrate into it, in which cases they would place round about the church and even on the walls the tapers offered in honor of the saint: when they were all lighted, the church, generally so quiet and solemn, presented a most agreeable picture. The Paduans wept for joy, deeming themselves happy in the

possession of a treasure which crowned the celebrity of their city, and contributed daily to her prosperity.

Chapter XXIII

Canonization of Saint Antony - Miracles which Attested his Sanctity - Publication of the Bull of his Canonization

God daily honored the tomb of the saint by fresh miracles, generally wrought in favor of those who had made their confessions with truly contrite and repentant hearts. As these miracles succeeded each other uninterruptedly for the space of a year, the Paduans thought seriously of soliciting the court of Rome to proceed to the canonization of their glorious benefactor.

With that end in view, the bishop of Padua sent a deputation to Rome, composed of two canons and two Friars Minor. The podestat joined to them four of the principal men of the city, charged to present the petitions of the doctors of the university to the Sovereign Pontiff. While these deputies were making the preparations for departure, two cardinals, with a large suite, unexpectedly arrived at Padua. They were Otho Bianchi di Alerano, cardinal deacon, and Giacomo de Pecoraja, cardinal bishop of Preneste; both had received orders from the Pope to repair to Lombardy, to endeavor to reconcile the citizens and the Emperor. When these venerable dignitaries learned the motive of the deputation to Rome; they begged the bishop and magistrates to delay their departure, and meanwhile examined themselves into the miracles which were to be brought forward to obtain the saint's canonization. Their examination so thoroughly satisfied them, that they gave a certificate to the Paduan deputation, and forwarded a petition to the Pope, begging him to proceed without delay to the canonization of Antony.

The Pope was then at Spoleto. After hearing the deputies from Padua, he answered them that he had already thought

upon the subject of their mission in a first assemblage of cardinals, who would proceed as quickly as possible to a second examination.

Gregory charged the cardinal bishop of Abbeville, a monk of the congregation of Cluny, to conduct this second examination, and convoked an assemblage of cardinals to meet when that formality should have been finished.

The process of canonization was quickly ended. Some cardinals objected at first to the haste with which they were proceeding to canonize our saint; but, soon ceasing their opposition, they adopted the opinion of their colleagues, and said to the Holy Father: -

"We should indeed be guilty did we not render here below all due honor to the eminent virtues of the blessed Antony, since Almighty God has crowned him with glory in the Kingdom of Heaven. To deny the miracles brought forward would be an act of injustice; to refuse to recognize publicly the saint's merits would be a species of jealousy."

These words of the cardinals, as well as the circumstances which had inspired them, so gratified the Sovereign Pontiff that he fixed upon May 30th, the feast of Pentecost, for the solemnity of the canonization. On that day an immense multitude of pilgrims from all countries flocked to Spoleto. The Pope, accompanied by his cardinals, went early in the morning to the cathedral church, and ordered that, before commencing the religious ceremony, the account of the miracles which had been proven in the examination relative to the saint's canonization should be read from the pulpit.

That account taught the people that seven persons, for the most part become horribly deformed by their several

infirmities, had recovered their health and the use of their limbs at Saint Antony's tomb.

Also, a similar miracle in favor of fourteen other persons, among whom were several deaf people.

They also mentioned several other miracles wrought at the tomb of the saint - seven blind persons recovered their sight; three deaf ones their hearing, and two young persons were cured of the falling-sickness.

Three persons were raised to life through the intercession of the saint.

A knight of Salvaterra, named Aleardino, more Catholic in name than in practice, went to Padua to visit a wine-dealer. At table the conversation turned upon the miracles of Saint Antony, which were everywhere the general topic. These marvelous recitals caused Aleardino to smile maliciously, and say to his companions: -

"You certainly relate admirable and extraordinary things; but I must confess to you frankly that I have not faith enough to credit them in the slightest degree. I will never believe them unless I am able to throw this glass, which I now hold, on the ground without breaking it."

So saying, he took up a wine-glass placed before him, and threw it violently on the ground; the glass bounced like an India-rubber ball, and did not even crack. Aleardino was no longer incredulous; he repented of his sins, made a general confession, and led ever after an edifying life. He always carried about him the wonderful glass, which he loved to show as a visible proof of the miracle of which it had been the occasion and instrument. Dining one day at a strange inn, he related what had happened to him in Padua, showing the glass as a proof of what he said. One of the guests,

rather incredulous, and counting, perhaps, upon witnessing a miracle in his turn said to the knight: -

"I will never believe your story unless this vine-branch, which I hold in my hand, becomes instantly covered with leaves, and produces grapes with whose juice I can fill my cup."

Scarcely had he uttered these words than he saw the vine-branch covered with leaves and bunches of grapes. No one any more dared to call in question the power of Antony.

A man attached to the service of the bishop of Padua, having laughed at Saint Antony and his miracles, was suddenly seized by a malignant disorder; he did nothing but weep and groan, bitterly regretting having treated the saint and his actions with derision. Deeming himself unworthy to approach his tomb, he implored his mother to go thither and pray for his recovery. Her prayer was heard, and her son was instantaneously cured.

A ship, containing twenty-six persons, sailing toward San Hilario, was overtaken by a violent storm in the lagoons of San Georgio, in Alga. All the travelers considered themselves lost, for the ship seemed every moment upon the point of being swallowed up by the waves. All prepared for death, made their confession to a priest who happily was on board, and implored the assistance of Heaven, through the intercession of Saint Antony; their confidence in God and in the saint's protection saved them from shipwreck; for the wind fell, the sea became calm, and a miraculous light appeared at the masthead and guided them safely into port amid the darkness of night.

A lay sister, of the order of Saint Clare, went to Arceli while Saint Antony's body yet lay there. She kissed it respectfully,

and begged the saint to obtain for her from Divine mercy to be enabled to suffer here below in her body all the torments she deserved by her sins. Her prayer was granted; but her sufferings rendered her so insupportable to her sisters and to herself that she soon wished to be freed from them. Remembering that she had in her possession a piece of the saint's habit, she had it brought to her, and, placing it on her person, was at once delivered from all pain.

They mentioned three more miracles of a similar kind, after which the Pope solemnly pronounced the decree of the canonization, and the ceremony was terminated by the singing of the Te Deum laudamus, and the antiphon O Doctor Optime! which were intoned by the bishop and finished by the priests.

On the 1st of June the Pope published the bull of canonization, addressed to the Paduans only, and on the 20th of the same month, that which made known Antony's glory to the whole world.

We will give here below the former of these two bulls: -

GREGORY,

BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD, TO HIS WORTHY BRETHREN, THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS, THE PODESTAT, AND THE INHABITANTS OF PADUA: -

Health and Apostolic Benediction:

We received with paternal benevolence the letters which your piety caused you to send us by your delegates, our beloved sons G. Prior of Sta. Maria de Monte Crucis, archdeacon and canon, Brother Gerard, Brother Spinatellus, and the noble counts Schinela and Robert, Pascal and Charles, citizens of Padua, and have fully understood their

tenor as well as the wise communications which your delegates orally pronounced in your name. As your letters as well as your delegates inform us that it is your intention to beg us humbly that, since God has overwhelmed Antony, of holy memory, with such glory, and that (to bear witness of his everlasting remembrance among men, and a sure proof of his future immortality) He has honored his tomb with so many and such great miracles that it would be unwise not to seek his protection, as well as that of the other saints, you wish us to hasten to enroll his name among those of the saints.

We have thought proper, notwithstanding the ancient custom of the Church of Rome to proceed in similar affairs with no precipitation, but slowly and with mature deliberation, through consideration for your true zeal for the faith, and your attachment for us, and for the said Church, to inscribe him in the cataogue of the saints, in order to confound the malice of heretics, and to strengthen all in the Catholic faith; and this after having previously consulted those brethren and those prelates who were at the court of Rome at the time. Wishing, therefore, that the city of Padua, shining like a candle set upon a candlestick, should enlighten all others by her example, we beg and we earnestly exhort you all, and this we impose upon you to merit the pardon of your sins, to persevere unshaken in the fear of the Holy Name, and in love and devotion to the Apostolic See.

As regards ourselves, as we love you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, we will watch over your honor and your advancement as far as lies in our power before God.

Given at Spoleto, in the kalends of June, the sixth year of our pontificate.

Chapter XXIV

Saint Antony Delivers Padua from the Tyranny of Ezzelino - First Translation of the Saint's Body - Perfect State of Preservation in which his Tongue was Found - Second Translation - Il Santo

Padua had at last fallen into the power of the bloody Ezzelino; the events of 1239 filled up the measure of her misfortune. Many of her nobles were condemned to death, the podestat and his counselors banished, and the guardian of the Friars Minor, Lucas Belludino, already known to the reader, expelled from the city. Ezzelino gave the superintendence to his nephew Encelino, a man as wicked as himself. Ezzelino's reign at Padua lasted nineteen years. The tyrant, irritated against that unhappy city by reason of her long and heroic resistance, ruled her with a rod of iron. This unjustifiable conduct was fatal to the university. Padua, formerly so flourishing, rapidly declined; and even the beautiful church dedicated to Saint Antony, which had been begun toward the close of the preceding administration, by the celebrated architect Nicholas of Pisa, was left unfinished.

However, Lucas Belludino had secretly re-entered the city, and remained in careful concealment in the convent of Saint Mary. After the night office, he, with the guardian, Bartolomeo Coradino, frequently spent some time in prayer at Saint Antony's tomb, begging him to come to the assistance of the good city of Padua. One evening, as these two holy persons were praying in the chapel dedicated to the saint, a voice suddenly issued from the tomb, telling them that the city should be freed from her tyrannical master on the 19th of June, six days after the feast of Saint Antony. This prediction greatly rejoiced the Friars Minor, who

spread it throughout the city, taking all necessary precautions to prevent it from reaching the ears of the tyrant.

The good citizens of Padua took courage at this news, for they placed unlimited confidence in their powerful patron, Antony. They celebrated the feast of the 13th of June with all possible solemnity, and with greater signs of happiness than they had shown for many years.

Saint Antony's promise was quickly accomplished; for Alexander IV, the reigning Pontiff, excommunicated Ezzelino, declared him a heretic, and re-enforced the army of the allied Guelphs by his own troops, under the command of the legate, Octaviano Ubaldini.

The army of the Guelphs appeared before the walls of Padua while they were celebrating the octave of the feast of Saint Antony. Priests and seculars redoubled their fervent prayers. God listened to them. A panic suddenly took possession of the governor: although his city was abundantly supplied with provisions, and defended by numerous and solid ramparts, he fled from it, followed by his troops. Shortly after his departure, by the 20th of June, the allied Guelphs became masters of Padua without striking a blow.

We may judge of the happiness of the Paduans, and of their gratitude toward Saint Antony for the favor he had obtained for them from Heaven! In their joy they knew not what to do to testify to all the world their love and devotion toward their holy patron. They immediately decided to continue the building of the church of the Friars Minor. The following year (1257) the administrative council chose Saint Antony as patron of the city, and ordered that a sum of four thousand pounds of silver should be annually raised from the public treasury to finish the church; and furthermore, that the

bishop and his clergy, the podestat and his counselors, the professors of the university and their scholars, in short, all the different congregations of the city, should repair to Saint Antony's tomb at the first vespers of his feast-day, and offer there in his honor tapers, oil for the lamps, and other gifts.

In 1263 they resolved to transport Saint Antony's body into the new church, then nearly finished. Saint Bonaventure, at that time General of the Friars Minor, reached Padua on the 6th of April, and the day after his arrival they exhumed the saint's remains. The bones were found untouched, but the flesh had fallen to dust; but after a minute examination of the body, they discovered that the tongue was in a perfect state of preservation, and as fresh and red as that of a living man. Saint Bonaventure, deeply moved at the prodigy, took up the tongue in his hand and cried out: -

"O blessed tongue! thou who hast so long blessed God, and taught others to bless him! thou fully provest to us how great were Antony's merits before God!" After which he kissed it with the greatest respect.

He then handed the precious relic to the podestat; the latter caused it to be encased in a crystal shrine, ornamented with golden plates, and carefully placed among the treasures of the church. His bones were deposited in a rich marble tomb, said to be the work of the four martyrs, known as the four crowned martyrs, who suffered under the Emperor Diocletian. It appears that this tomb was discovered by a Divine revelation at the time of Saint Antony's death. Even in our own time the order sings, on the anniversary day of the translation of the saint's mortal remains:

"Rejoice, happy Padua, who possessest, enshrined upon the altar, the treasure made known by Divine revelation!"

In 1310, the Friars Minor held their general chapter at Padua; on which occasion they removed the shrine containing the saint's body from the main altar to another one lately constructed in the middle of the church.

On the 15th of February, 1350, Cardinal Guy de Montfort, having been saved from great peril through the saint's intercession, came to Padua, and, in gratitude for the favor vouchsafed him, placed his bones in a silver shrine, which was afterward replaced in the tomb.

He also caused the saint's head to be enshrined in a case of the same metal, and placed in the sacristy. At the general chapter held at Lyons in 1351, they decided to celebrate the translation of Saint Antony's remains yearly, on the 15th of February. This decision was approved by Martin V, who granted an indulgence of fifty years to all the faithful who should visit, on that day, any church belonging to the Friars Minor. Here is the account given by a pious pilgrim of the church of Saint Antony, known as Il Santo:

"This church," he says, "is the most admirable, and the richest wonder of Padua. The sumptuous monument, seen from the hill, seems like an Oriental diadem, with its six cupolas, its vast galleries, and its elegant campanilas. Begun in 1259 by the architect Nicholas Pisano, it was continued, ornamented, and embellished in every succeeding century. The most distinguished artists gloried in adding to its beauty, and their efforts were stimulated by the generous gifts of the university and citizens of Padua."

Il Santo contains several masterpieces. The celebrated sculptor, Donatello, of Florence, ornamented the main altar with statues of the four patrons of that ancient city, and admirable bas-reliefs in bronze. A few years later, Bellano de Padua decorated the choir with other precious bas-reliefs,

representing the prophetic scenes of Jewish history; and the Venetian, Andrea Riccio, sculptured the magnificent brass candelabra, which cost him, it is said, ten years of labor, and are the most beautiful in the world. The beautiful chapel, which contains Saint Antony's tomb, has, perhaps, no rival throughout the Christian world. Under each one of the elegant arches which surround and enshrine it in their center as a mysterious treasure, Antonio Minello, of Padua, Hieronymo Campagna, of Verona, Jacopo Sanseverino, of Florence, Tullio and Antonio Lombardo, have retraced in exquisite bas-reliefs, in marble, several miracles and incidents in the saint's life. Elegant ornaments in stucco adorn the vaulted arch. Next we admire the Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, a work of the celebrated Titian Minio, of Padua; a majestic altar, four angels holding candelabra, and the superb statues of Saint Bonaventure, Saint Louis, and Saint Antony, the works of Titian Aspetti. Surrounded by these wonders of art and piety, the tomb of Antony shines with redoubled luster; one might liken it to a pearl of inestimable price, guarded and protected in an honorable sanctuary by other precious diamonds forming its crown.

After having traversed the piazza alone, admired the grand and magnificent church of Santa Giustina, and cast a passing glance upon the Prato della Valle, a sort of Pantheon in the open air, wherein are collected the statues of the great men of Padua, the pilgrim, full of sweet and pious thoughts, enters the church Il Santo, and suddenly kneels and prays in the splendid chapel of the saint whose remembrance, after the lapse of six centuries, still lives fresh and green in the hearts of all. There, prostrate before his mortal remains, he offers to this well-beloved of Christ his tribute of prayers and vows; and, remembering the prodigy of Almighty Power which preserved intact his eloquent tongue, the humble instrument of his words, so fertile in blessings, he repeats, mentally, with Saint Bonaventure, "O

blessed tongue, which has always praised God, and caused men to bless Him also, how precious thou art before God! Thus Eternal Wisdom multiplies miracles to glorify before men those whose voices have glorified His name here below!"

"Saint Antony of Padua," says the same writer, "is one of the most popular saints of Italy. Popular gratitude honors his memory by extraordinary marks of homage. Christian artists, by adopting for his pictures the pure and graceful type which represents him holding in his arms the Infant Jesus, have further contributed to popularize his name, to redouble the piety of the faithful in his behalf. Why should not those arms, which held the Savior Himself, be powerful to supplicate and to obtain like those of His Divine Mother? The faithful, therefore, invoke him with confidence and love; as they invoke the Madonna, holding in her arms the Infant God, the Redeemer of the world."

Il Santo contains many other splendid tombs, among which we specially notice the monument raised to the memory of the illustrious and learned cardinal Pietro Bembo, as well as that dedicated to the admiral Alessandro Contarini, who defended the republic against the Turks. But the tomb which most delights the devotees of Saint Antony is that of the courageous Lucas Belludino, his friend and inseparable companion, who was as good a citizen as he was a fervent religious. This tomb is in the chapel built by the noble family of Conti. It is cut in stone, and rests upon four columns.

It is not our design to dilate at length upon the beauties of this magnificent church of Padua. Should the reader desire more ample details, we advise him to consult either Wadding de la Haye, or the Abbé Gaume, whose interesting work, *Les Trois Romes*, contains a minute and tasteful description of the church Il Santo.

Chapter XXV

Antony the Beloved Saint of All Nations

Nothing remains for us now but to mention some of the most remarkable favors with which almost all the European nations have been favored through the intercession of Saint Antony, as well as the practices of piety by which the great Thaumaturgus of Padua is everywhere honored. It would be impossible to enumerate the miracles he wrought in various cities and countries. Antony is of the number of those saints who are continually working miracles, and whom the Lord gave to the world as guardian angels and depositories of His infinite mercy, who are always ready to carry to the foot of His throne of clemency and grace the sighs and tears of suffering humanity.

Italy

On returning from a mission, Antony stopped upon a hill in the environs of Padua, whither he was going. From that height he saw at his feet that ancient and flourishing city: its elegant Byzantine towers, its majestic fortifications, and its charming situation, on the shores of the Astico and the Brenta, gave it an aspect at once picturesque and serene. This city, which shared with proud Venice the empire of the seas, seemed to glory in the spectacle of the gondolas crossing one another on the Brenta, and to indulge in hopes of the most brilliant future.

At the sight, Antony fell into an ecstasy, and, looking into futurity, he saw the future grandeur of Padua, even amid the fogs which then overwhelmed that city. Lucas Belludino and Ruggiero cast their eyes upon their brother with no less surprise than respect.

Antony, suddenly, breathing with great difficulty, as if his chest were oppressed with the weight of his admiration, cried out: -

"Padua! happy Padua! thou art beautiful! thou art grand! But look into the future; for the day is at hand, when, outshining thine actual grandeur, thou shalt be exalted to the skies. Innumerable multitudes of strangers shall flock within thy walls, from all parts of the world, and nations shall esteem themselves happy to tread upon thy soil."

This prophecy was literally accomplished. From that time the ancient Trojan city, the birthplace of Titus Livy, surpassed Venice, if not by her wealth and power, at least by her progress in science and literature. Nevertheless, she long languished under the despotism of the Venetian doges. Padua was, however, rich and powerful; but her treasures and her strength were much inferior to that of Venice, which latter city shared with her only the over-plus of her riches.

But Padua was not slow in raising herself to a high degree of splendor and prosperity. The glorious tomb of a poor Friar Minor attracted thither pilgrims from all countries, and enriched her by magnificent gifts, which princes sent thither as a sort of tax. The university, which had contributed to immortalize the saint's memory, had a large share in the blessings of Heaven, for it remained flourishing, and could count among its doctors the most distinguished and learned men in Europe. It was at the University of Padua that Saint Francis of Sales was taught the various sciences, by such men as Possevin and Pancirola; there also taught, with great success, the youthful Helen Cornaro Piscopia, who, dying at the age of thirty-eight years, was mourned as a prodigy of learning and piety; and there, finally, Forcellini wrote his dictionary, which is looked upon by literary men as a

remarkable work for the time. This university, at the time of Saint Antony's life, contained six thousand students.

Now proud Venice, fallen into decay, sees gondolas, laden with the wealth of Padua, glide along the Brenta, plough through her canals, and land at the neighboring ports; she herself, formerly the queen of the seas, is forced to receive the riches of her ancient rival.

The city of Padua is specially indebted for her prosperity to Saint Antony, her illustrious patron. Therefore she has, since the thirteenth century, neglected no occasion to evince her gratitude toward her powerful protector. The church Il Santo is a monument of her love.

Saint Antony, not satisfied with watching over the public happiness, lent a favorable ear to the complaints and prayers of whoever had recourse to him. The entire population, having a share in the particular blessings obtained through the intercession of the saint, found in each one a new motive of gratitude; a sort of strife of generosity on the one side, and of gratitude on the other, seemed to be established between Antony and the citizens of Padua. The administration of the city, wishing to perpetuate the memory of their happy deliverance from the despotic yoke of Ezzelino, decreed that the octave of the saint's feast should be celebrated with as much solemnity as the feast itself; and that a fair should be held upon the square called di San Antonio, lasting during the eight days which preceded and the eight days which followed the said feast. And also, in 1275, it was decided, that on the 12th of June, the eve of the feast of Saint Antony, the arms of the city, as well as the banners and standards, should be carried to the church Il Santo, to be consecrated to the saint; that during the night a captain, accompanied by twenty soldiers, should mount guard near the tomb; that on the following day, the

feast of the saint, a general procession, including the bishop with his clergy, the podestat with his council, the corporations of tradesmen, the congregations and the professors of the university with their students, should repair to the saint's tomb, to deposit there tapers and other gifts; that a similar solemnity should take place upon the octave day itself; and, finally, that public games should be held during eight consecutive days, at the expense of the city. Whether the attachment of the citizens of Padua toward their holy patron has lasted during the succeeding centuries, may be proven by the following fact: -

In 1797, Padua was captured by the troops of the French Republic. Once in the power of the stranger, it was noised abroad that the governor had given orders to seize the treasures of the churches, and to sell, among other things of value, the rich reliquary which contained the tongue of Saint Antony. The people rose in revolt at the terrible news. But what chance had a weak militia against disciplined soldiers? Their powerlessness obliged them to renounce all thought of opposition; but they had recourse to the following expedient: they organized a voluntary subscription, to which all the inhabitants of the city contributed according to their means. It produced the sum requisite to ransom the precious reliquary. Here is certainly a noble example of lively faith, during a period of irreligion and incredulity, and under the reign of false philosophers! Thus the citizens of Padua were convinced that their saint performed - so it was stated - thirty miracles daily.

But the city of Padua was not alone in experiencing the happy effects of Antony's power - all Italy was favored by his protection, and our Saint soon became the beloved saint of the people, as he had been during his life their beloved preacher. The Italian invokes his Madonna and Saint Antony in all adversity and perils, for he knows from experience that

it is a prayer never offered in vain. To learn with what pomp the feast of the holy Friar Minor is celebrated outside of Padua, we need but read, in the above-mentioned work of Maxime de Mont Rond, the charming description of the feast celebrated in the church of the Ara Coeli, situated upon the Capitoline Hill in Rome: it proves that the capital of the Christian world is not less zealous for the glory of Saint Antony than the city of Padua herself.

Portugal and Spain

On the 1st of February, 1587, Pope Sixtus V published a bull, by which he ordered the Catholic world to solemnize the saint's feast with the double rite (*ritu duplici*); but, previously to that date, Portugal, as well as the entire order of Friars Minor, had been permitted to celebrate his feast with a pomp similar to that of a doctor of the church, and to honor him with the title of "Great Doctor," Doctor Maximus. This permission had been granted them by several Popes.

The Portuguese venerated and loved their saintly compatriot because he was born in their land, and also because he showered his greatest favors upon it.

Sanchia, daughter of Alfonso IX, king of Leon, and of Theresa, daughter to Sancho I, king of Portugal, died in 1240. This young princess was only thirteen years of age. Her inconsolable mother could not tear herself away from the cherished remains; when the king wished to bury the child, she threw herself at the feet of her royal spouse, and begged him, with tears, to defer the interment for three days. The king, deeply moved by the prayers and tears of his queen, consented to the delay. Theresa, then invoking Saint Antony, reminded him that he was her countryman, and begged him to restore her child to life. The fervor of her prayers and her great confidence in God could not fail to be

rewarded, the child was restored to life, but merely to give consolation to her mother. Sanchia's days were numbered; she was to die, and she did die forty days after, not to awake until the day of judgment.

A youth, named Paris, son of Saint Antony's sister, was playing one day with some companions on the banks of the Tagus. The thought entered into his head to embark with them in one or other of the fishing-boats moored near the shore, and enjoy a short sail on the river. To unloose one and go on board of it was short work for the giddy boys. They amused themselves pleasantly for a while, sailing at random upon the still water. But the enjoyment was to cost them dear. The weather grew rough, the wind became furious, and soon the little bark, carried away by the force of the torrent, cut the waves with the rapidity of an arrow. The frightened boys could not manage the helm: now they were raised high on the crest of the waves, then they would disappear in their deep furrows. We may fancy the terror of the imprudent children. Finally, a violent squall of wind threw the bark on her lee, she upset, and the children fell into the river. They were not far from shore; and as all knew how to swim, they soon reached land. But their number was incomplete: vainly they waited for Paris, the youngest among them; the unfortunate boy, who could not swim, had been swallowed up by the waves, for his comrades had lost sight of him while making every possible effort to save themselves.

They all returned silently and sorrowfully to Lisbon, and, seeking the wretched parents, told them, with tears in their eyes, of the fate of Paris. We may readily imagine their consternation and grief; the mother, especially, was beside herself with sorrow. The father, wishing to bury his son in consecrated ground, set several fishermen to seek for the body. Although the latter despaired of finding it, they undertook the requisite search, useless in their eyes, to

satisfy the father. But their efforts were crowned with success; they found the corpse and brought it to Lisbon.

From that moment it was impossible to tear the fond mother from the corpse of her boy. She violently opposed its burial, and said sobbingly to those who wished to raise it to carry it to the cemetery, that she would sooner suffer herself to be buried alive than to be separated from the object of her sorrow and love. But this body was commencing to decay, and already filled the chamber where it lay with an insupportable stench, and it was necessary to brave the mother's wrath and remove it at once. The wretched woman, throwing herself on her knees, and raising her hands toward Heaven, cried out in a voice broken by sobs: "Saint Antony! hasten to my assistance! prove to me your brotherly love! You work so many miracles in favor of strangers, will you refuse to work one in favor of your unhappy sister? Antony! restore to me my son! restore Paris to my arms, and I promise you to consecrate him to God in the order of Friars Minor!"

Scarcely had she invoked Saint Antony when her child came to life and stood up as if no accident had happened to him. Paris accomplished his mother's vow: he became a Friar Minor, and so faithfully followed in his holy uncle's footsteps, that, after an extraordinarily edifying life, he slept in peace.

This favor, and many similar ones, obtained through the intercession of Saint Antony, greatly augmented the gratitude felt toward him by the Portuguese. Alfonso III so venerated the great thaumaturgus that he gave his daughter the name of Helen of Saint Antony, in baptism.

King Denis, sharing the veneration of Alfonso, always spoke with great praise of the virtues and power of his saintly compatriot.

King Juan II gave still more numerous and greater proofs of zeal for the glory of Saint Antony. He built at Lisbon a large and magnificent church in honor of our saint, on the very spot where the first residence of the Bulhon family stood, and he placed in various parts of the edifice the arms of the houses of Bulhon and Tevera, to perpetuate the remembrance of the two illustrious families which had given to the Church so enlightened and comprehensive a master-spirit, and to the kingdom of Portugal so powerful and illustrious a protector.

Don Sebastian, that prince so unfortunate in the war against the Moors, was no less devout to Saint Antony than his predecessors. In 1579, Matteo Zani, the Venetian' ambassador, conveyed a letter from the king to the doge, Nicolo di Ponte, begging the latter to grant him some part of the bones of Saint Antony. The republic presented him with a part of the saint's shoulder. This relic was joyfully received by the Portuguese, enclosed in a precious reliquary, and placed in the church of Saint Antony, at Lisbon.

The piety of the Portuguese was constant, and Saint Antony continued to work many miracles. In 1706, Portugal chose our saint for her generalissimo, and granted him a large pension as belonging to that title. This action of Christian simplicity has given rise to many mischievous pleasantries, and served as a base for a number of absurd stories; yet what is there so new or astonishing in seeing a Catholic country place herself under the protection of a saint? The same thing has been seen in our day in the kingdom of Spain. But we do not infer from the confidence of a nation in the power of a saint that she is necessarily invincible. God knows better than we do whether it is preferable for a people to conquer or be conquered. His providence sometimes leads nations to victory through defeat, while He humbles

others after having granted them splendid victories: history, especially that of later times, proves this truth.

The following facts will show the sentiments of profound veneration which the Spaniards felt for Saint Antony: In 1259 it was decided, among other things, at the general chapter of the Cistercian order, held in Aragon, to celebrate, in all their churches, the feast of Saint Antony with the same solemnity as that of Saint Jerome; a decision followed shortly after, as we have already noticed, by the Franciscan order and the kingdom of Portugal.

Margaret of Austria, wife of Philip III, king of Spain, asked and obtained a part of the relics of Saint Antony. The doge, Leonardo Donatello, sent to her majesty a piece of his skull. The pious queen placed the precious treasure among her other relics in the palace chapel.

The Spanish nation, so zealous for the interests of religion, still remains firmly devoted to the service of Saint Antony, from whom it receives many and constant favors. Cristoval Suarez de Figueroa, in his *Traveler, or, Considerations upon Human Life*, relates, that a prize having been promised, in his own day, to the author of the best hymn in honor of Saint Antony, there were about five thousand of them composed in his honor. No church is seen throughout Spain without its altar dedicated to Saint Antony; his feast is everywhere celebrated with great pomp and solemnity, and all manifest their confidence in his intercession by novenas, prayers, and promises.

Belgium

This land can glorify herself for having, from the first, shown great zeal for the glory of Saint Antony. According to Wadding, the Friars Minor arrived there before 1220. We find

them already established at Bruges in 1221, as is proven by a manuscript found among the archives of our convent of Saint Troud, given to the Friars Minor by the countess Jane, daughter of the emperor Baldwin. Their order owned many convents in the southern part of the Low Countries, from about 1232, the date of the canonization of Saint Antony. Before 1230, convents were already founded in Brussels, Anvers, Louvain, Tournay, Maestricht, and Saint Troud, if we may believe Wadding and Fiesen; for it appears, judging from the old archives of the abbey of Saint Troud, that the latter convent was first founded in 1230. When the miracles of Saint Antony had acquired a world-wide renown, the Friars Minor of Belgium hastened to make known the illustrious Thaumaturgus to their fellow-citizens, and to establish the devotion among them. Their pious enterprise succeeded the better that St Antony seconded it by numerous prodigies. It would be impossible to enumerate all the miracles wrought throughout Belgium by the saint's intercession. Father van der Borcht, writing in the latter part of the seventeenth century, says that, should he undertake to recount the miracles, which took place in most of the Belgian cities, "he could never end the long series, so numerous were they." Most of the miracles mentioned by this author relate either to the finding of lost things or to deliverance from some imminent danger. He gives a detailed account of those wrought by the saint in favor of Nicholas Verunleus, doctor of the university of Louvain; of Don Juan Gomez Cano, of Brussels; of Laurent Jacob, curate of Neder-Heylissem, and many others admitted by the Bollandists.

The devotion to Saint Antony has remained lively and solid throughout Belgium, even to our own time; in no country, perhaps, is the novena in honor of the saint so extensively practiced, and nowhere does he bestow so many favors. Before the French Revolution of 1789, when the Friars Minor were firmly established in our cities, these latter possessed

each a church where the faithful could gain a plenary indulgence yearly, on the 13th of June. Each Tuesday a solemn Mass was sung in all our churches in his honor, during which all could also gain a plenary indulgence, which privilege was restored to the Friars Minor after the Revolution.

We cannot pass over in silence a remarkable favor, obtained through our saint's intercession. In 1731, when about to pull down the old church of the Friars Minors at Saint Troude, in order to build another, which became one of the most beautiful ever possessed by the order in Belgium, the guardian of the convent ordered a Mass to be sung in honor of Saint Antony, and a solemn procession to be made in the interior of the convent, during which the blessed sacrament was carried in triumph together with the statue of our saint, to avert all accidents.

During the pulling down of the church a workman was buried beneath the ruins of a wall. So much time was consumed in removing the mass of stones which covered him, that it was feared he was already dead. However, he came to light, safe and sound, to the general joy as well as astonishment: this surprising fact could only be explained by the merits and protection of Saint Antony.

The city of Gand has chosen Saint Antony as its patron, and seems to wish, if possible, to rival Padua in zeal for his honor. The personal piety as well as the encouragements of the venerable primate of Eastern Flanders, Mgr. Delebecque, had greatly contributed to promote the devotion to Saint Antony. Another cause of the ardor of the people of Gand in seeking Saint Antony's assistance in their needs is the piety of a Beguine, belonging to the Grand Beguinage of their city; we speak of Miss Theresa Verhaeghe, who died in January 1853, in the odor of sanctity. This pious Beguine,

having obtained, during her youth, many graces through the saint's intercession, formed the habit of having recourse to Saint Antony in all her necessities and troubles.

When, later in life, she entered the Beguinage, she used frequently to make the novena in honor of Saint Antony, and cause others to do likewise. Her simplicity and firm confidence readily obtained her all that she asked. The efficacy of her prayers became celebrated. From that time, whoever was in any need or trouble, either of soul or body, had recourse to Saint Antony, through the intermedium of Miss Verhaeghe. Such crowds flocked to the Grand Beguinage, and the devotion to Saint Antony increased so rapidly, that in 1851 the bishop permitted a little chapel to be built near the residence of Theresa, which was constantly filled with devotees of Saint Anthony.

It is to be hoped that Belgium, persevering in this devotion, as well as many others, will be able to cope with the efforts of irreligion and immorality. Then she will deserve to retain the glorious title of Catholic, and pass happily through all political difficulties; for a country where religion is honored, and which shelters herself under the protection of the saints, cannot fall into decay.

We must end this chapter, already too long. We should have yet much to say regarding Italy, Poland, Germany, France, the East Indies, etc., but, like Father van der Borcht, we fear never to reach the last miracle, did we attempt to mention all. Let it suffice to affirm that Saint Antony continues still to be the beloved saint of the people, and is never weary of recompensing their piety by innumerable favors.

Responsory of Saint Bonaventure

We could not omit the celebrated Responsorium composed by Saint Bonaventure. It is a sublime song, which concisely commemorates all the miracles of Saint Antony. The holy doctor, after having meditated upon the merits and glory of his brother in religion, felt a lively desire to describe in a few words the marvelous acts of the saint, in order to spread their knowledge among the people. This meditation enlightening his mind, he seized his pen, and wrote this Responsorium in a transport of holy joy. Many miracles have been wrought through its recital. He also gave an ancient translation of the Collect. The use of this Responsorium and Collect is recommended for novenas.

The Responsory of Saint Antony of Padua

If miracles thou fain wouldst see,
Lo! error, death, calamity,
The leprous stain, the demon flies,
From beds of pain the sick arise.

The hungry seas forego their prey,
The prisoner's cruel chains give way,
While palsied limbs and chattels lost
Both young and old recovered boast.

And perils perish, plenty's hoard
Is heaped on hunger's famished board,
Let those relate who know it well,
Let Padua of her patron tell.

The hungry seas forego their prey,
The prisoner's cruel chains give way,

While palsied limbs and chattels lost
Both young and old recovered boast

Pray for us, holy Antony,
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray -

O God, let the votive celebration of the blessed Antony, Thy confessor, make glad Thy Church, that we may be fortified by spiritual aid, and may deserve to possess eternal joys. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *Life of Saint Anthony of Padua of the Order of Friars-Minor*, by Father Servais Dirks, Friar-Minor, Recollect of the Belgian Province.

The cover image the painting *Sant'Antonio da Padova* by MOretto da Brescia, 16th century. The original is in the Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco, Milan, Italy, and the image was swiped from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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